

sojourners

August 2011 | www.sojo.net

Faith in Action for Social Justice

YOUR DAUGHTERS WILL PROPHECY

Why girls hold the
key to the new
South Africa

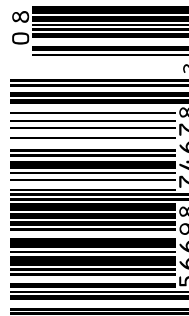
PLUS:

Men behaving badly

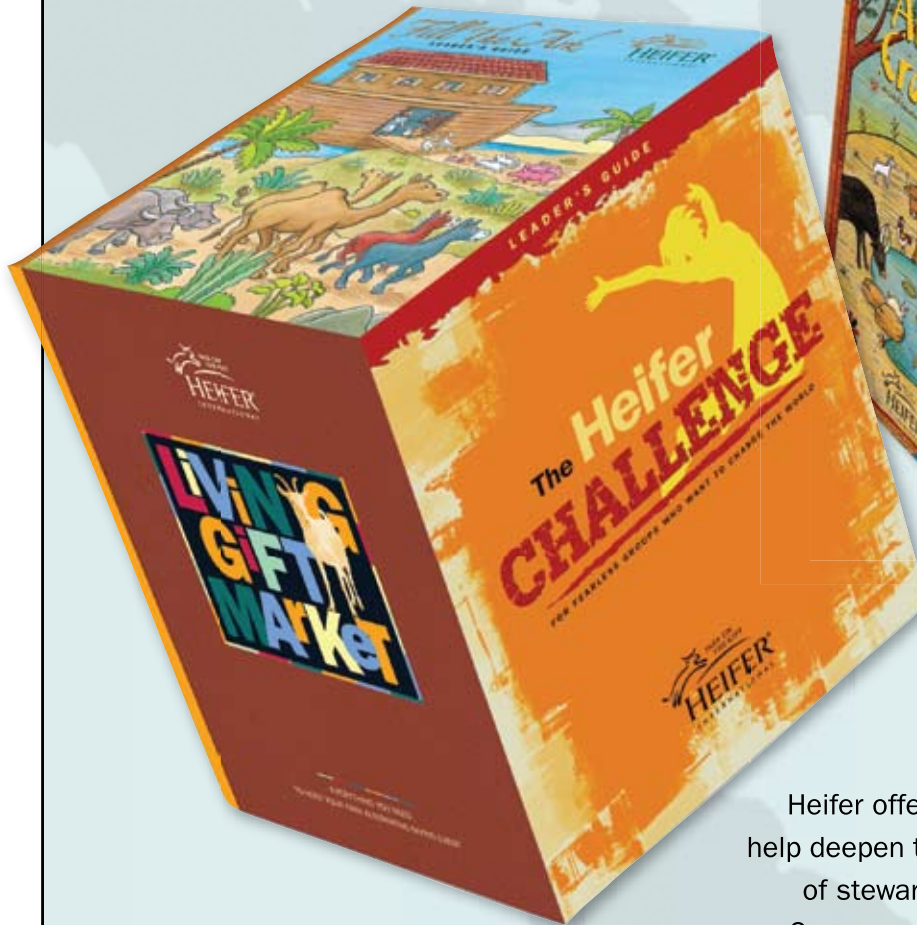
Is laughter really
the best medicine?

Walmart invades
the city

U.S./ Can. \$4.95



World Hunger Programs³



FREE!! Congregational Resources

Heifer offers faith communities resources to help deepen their congregation's understanding of stewardship and giving to those in need. Our resources include fundraising materials, global education curricula, Christian and Jewish-centered programs, trip opportunities and volunteer programs. The resources are fun and inspirational and help liven up a congregation. You can download many of the materials instantly or call **(800) 422-0474** to order a free copy of our resource guide.



Go to **www.heifer.org/congregations** or request the **Congregational Resources Catalog** by calling **(800) 422-0474**



14



34



38

sojourners contents

AUGUST 2011 Vol. 40 | No. 8

COVER

14 'Your Daughters Will Prophecy'

In South Africa, the future speaks in the voices of girls.

by Kimberly Burge

FEATURES

20 'We Are All One'

People of different faiths are uniting to defend religious freedom around the world.

by Lynne Hybels

24 Ending the Hunger Season

A Florida nonprofit shows the way to a sustainable food future.

by Fred Bahnson

28 Growing Together

Georgia's Koinonia Farm is a 70-year-old "demonstration plot for the kingdom of God."

by Melissa Aberle-Grasse

34 Is Laughter Really the Best Medicine?

How humor can help sustain the work of social justice.

by Jep Hostetler

CULTURE WATCH

38 Are You Paying Attention? Inner life vs. the Internet

Review: *One Life*; Interview: film director Greg Barker

40 Eyes & Ears, by Danny Duncan Collum

41 On Film, by Gareth Higgins

COMMENTARY

8 Urban Walmarks

9 Nuclear Japan

10 Better business

DEPARTMENTS

5 Letters

19 Poetry

48 Living the Word

COLUMNS

7 Hearts & Minds

by Jim Wallis

12 Bridges

by Eboo Patel

32 The Hungry Spirit

by Rose Marie Berger

50 H'rumps

by Ed Spivey Jr.

On the cover: Siya, 16, wears traditional Xhosa face paint for a cultural celebration at J.L. Zwane Presbyterian Church in Gugulethu, South Africa.

Help Change A LIFE

It's Easy to Help End Hunger
Every Month of the Year

Start your monthly gift at
bread.org/go/monthlygift



UN Photo/Logan Abassi

For every dollar you donate, Bread helps win more than \$100 in poverty-focused assistance that is directed to hungry and poor people in the U.S. and around the world.



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

FEED ORPHANED CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD!



FILL BOWL ▶ FIGHT HUNGER

Rice Bowls™ are a fun & FREE way for your group to provide food to orphaned children around the world. Order a box of bowls at 866.312.5791 or www.ricebowls.org



RICE BOWLS
FILL BOWL ▶ FIGHT HUNGER

MOHANDAS GANDHI WAS keenly aware of the root causes of hunger, and he knew that the problem was not a lack of resources on God's good earth. "There is enough for everyone's need," Gandhi said, "but not for everyone's greed."

ECHO, a broad-based Christian organization in Florida, understands that principle. The group aims not just to eradicate perpetual hunger, as Fred Bahnson explains in this issue, but to help people all over the world develop the tools to live abundantly. As an ECHO staff member put it, "Redemption doesn't just start after we die. We can begin to experience life in all its abundance right here on earth."

As Old Testament scholar Walter

Brueggemann recently explained, faith in God's bounty is the opposite of the myth that one can be self-sufficient. "Abundance narratives demand a firm grounding in a conviction about the reliability of God's generous creation," Brueggemann told a conference in San Antonio this spring. "The earth is blessed. God intended the world to produce abundance."

Koinonia Farm in Georgia has been practicing a theology of abundance for almost 70 years. Koinonia has stood as a beacon of



gritty love and audacious peace-making since its founding in the 1940s by Florence and Clarence Jordan, author of the Cotton Patch version of the New Testament. As Melissa Aberle-Grasse explains in "Growing Together," over the last decade Koinonia has experienced a renaissance, agriculturally and spiritually, thanks to a renewed commitment not only to permaculture but to the prophetic, community-based vision of the Jordans. Turns out, for the folks at Koinonia, sustainable farming and life in community are rooted in the same thing: faith in God's abundant love. ■

Letters

NO JUST WAR

David Cortright's "Finding the Way Out" (March 2011), about why it's time to end the war in Afghanistan, was excellent and timely with one exception—his appeal to the just war doctrine. A just war is an oxymoron! No war is morally justifiable, regardless of the criteria applied. We should bury this discredited doctrine. Peacemakers should devote all of their energies toward insisting upon nonviolent alternatives in resolving international conflicts.

Bernard Kern

North Richland Hills, Texas

SUPPLY AND DEMAND?

Regarding Elizabeth Palmberg's article on healthcare costs ("Sky High and Rising," June 2011): I've been under the impression that a lot of our high medical costs are related to the restricted number of doctors. Aren't there many more students wanting to get into medical school than are accepted? What if we increased the number of medical schools and graduated twice as many doctors—wouldn't the market drive down what doctors could charge for their services? Would that have to mean lowering standards for doctors? I understand the high cost of a medical education and would favor subsidizing the cost in exchange for lower costs for

It was eerie to reread Eisenhower's remarks [about the military-industrial complex] a few weeks ago, and then Wallis' provocative "Fasting for Changed Hearts."

—John P. Owen, Richland, Washington

doctors' services.

Isn't much of the research for new drugs done at government expense at the National Institutes of Health? Then drug companies take promising ideas to testing and production: another example of privatizing the profits and socializing the costs. I like the idea of eliminating exclusive patents on medicines.

Duane Beachey

Whitesburg, Kentucky

LOVE WINS

Re: Carolyn McKinstry's "From Mourning to Gladness" (May 2011): Birmingham Sunday spurred many African Americans and European Americans to get involved in the civil rights movement. What was meant to intimidate actually emboldened. That hate-filled bombing released such courage, love, motivation, and forgiveness.

Wendy Clarissa Geiger

Jacksonville, Florida

TEA AND COMMENTARY

In "The Gospel According to the Tea Party" (November 2010), Jim Wallis overlooked points. The tea party would exist if the winning Democratic Party candidate were white; these people think a Democratic president saying "hello" to China is traitorous. However, they would approve a Republican sale of ICBMs to China.

Unfortunately, probably the only way the tea partiers would change their opinion of "love thy neighbor" is if they experienced a major calamity (loss of a job or a major medical expense their insurance company refuses to pay). Then their view of social programs would change. It would make Saul's "road to Damascus" experience look like a shirt change.

David Ish

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Letters, *Sojourners*, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010 or letters@sojo.net. Include your name, city, and state. Letters may be edited.

sojourners

Chief Executive Officer/Editor-in-Chief, Jim Wallis
Chief of Staff, Joan M. Bisset
Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Michael Norman
Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer, Heidi Thompson
Vice President and Chief Advancement Officer, Robert Wilson-Black
Chief Administrative Officer, Karen L. Lattea
Senior Policy Adviser, Duane Shank

Editor, Jim Rice
Art Director, Ed Spivey Jr.
Associate Editors, Rose Marie Berger, Elizabeth Palmberg, Julie Polter
Web Editor, Jeannie Choi

Director of Circulation and Production, Cynthia J. Martens
Director of Advertising Sales, Kierra A. Jackson
Advertising Assistant, Rachel Burton

Director of Foundation Relations, Lisa Daughtry-Weiss
Director of Major Gifts, Larisa Friesen Hall
Director of Individual Giving, Leah Garrett
Individual Giving Associate, Leslie Abell
Development Associate, Emanuel Figueroa Marrero
Web Technologist, Bob Sabath
Associate Web Developer, Heather Wilson
Deputy Director of Policy and Organizing, Elizabeth Denlinger Reaves
Office Manager/Receptionist, Abayea Pelt
Speaking Events Manager, Sondra F. Shepley
Accountant, Brion Thomas
Administrative Director, Amber Hill
Communications Director, Tim King

Interns: Taylor Johnson, *Executive*; Alison Jones, *Advertising*; Claire Lorentzen, *Online Editorial*; Hannah Lythe, *Policy & Outreach*; Betsy Shirley, *Editorial*; Andrew Simpson, *Policy & Outreach*; Kiran Thadhani, *Marketing & Circulation*; Evan Trowbridge, *Media*

Contributing Editors: Diana Butler Bass, Daniel Berrigan, Melvin Bray, Walter Brueggemann, Majora Carter, Joan Chittister, Eugene Cho, Shane Claiborne, Danny Duncan Collum, Edwidge Danticat, Marie Dennis, John Dilulio, E.J. Dionne Jr., Valerie Elverton Dixon, Cathleen Falsani, Becky Garrison, Wes Granberg-Michaelson, Adam Hamilton, Vincent Harding, Lisa Sharon Harper, Obery Hendricks, Gareth Higgins, Joel Hunter, Lynne Hybels, Daisy Khan, Anne Lamott, Bill McKibben, Brian McLaren, Donald Miller, Chad Myers, Eboo Patel, John Perkins, Samuel Rodriguez, Richard Rohr, Ron Sider, Barbara Brown Taylor, Cornel West, Lauren Winner, Valerie Weaver-Zercher, Tyler Wigg Stevenson, Bill Wylie-Kellermann

Contributing Writers: Onleilove Alston, Frida Berrigan, Michaela Bruzzese, Kimberly Burge, Judy Coode, David Cortright, Aaron McCarroll Gallegos, Bob Hulteen, Celeste Kennel-Shank, Jesse Nathan, Glen Stassen, Andrew Wilkes, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Kari Jo Verhulst

Sojourners (ISSN 0364-2097) is published 11 times a year at 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Canadian Publications Sales Agreement #257494. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sojourners, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856.

Sojourners Online: sojourners@sojo.net • www.sojo.net
 Free weekly SojoMail: subscribe@sojo.net

You can end
homelessness for a
single mom & her
children.



Be a friend.
Create church-based
mentoring experiences.

BRIDGE OF HOPE®
NATIONAL

www.BridgeOfHopeInc.org

THE SECOND ANNUAL RITA M. MCGINLEY SYMPOSIUM



Exploring Social Justice
for Vulnerable Populations:

THE FACE OF THE IMMIGRANT

RITA M. MCGINLEY SYMPOSIUM
 School of Nursing
 DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

September 29–30, 2011

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY • Pittsburgh, Pa.

A two-day scholarly forum for nurses and other health care professionals to address issues of social justice in health care for immigrant populations.

For information visit WWW.DUQ.EDU/SOCIAL-JUSTICE

BY JIM WALLIS

Men Behaving Badly



IT'S A CONSISTENT storyline in the media, involving powerful men in politics, sports, business, and religion: Men behave with utter disregard for the dignity and humanity of women—using and abusing them at will, and acting as if they believe that they are entitled to do so. These men seem to think that the ordinary rules of decent behavior do not apply to them. We have a never-ending cavalcade of disgusting stories about men cheating on their wives and abandoning old wives for new ones; engaging in serial philandering as a way of life; sexually harassing and assaulting women; and even committing rape. But when all is said and done, the perpetrators are still playing basketball, football, and golf; they are

perverse excitement. The pain and suffering of the women involved, and the invisible hurt of the children, are brushed aside. Instead, the women are often subtly, and sometimes directly, blamed. And sometimes, in all-male circles, there is a wink and a nod, and, most disgustingly, even a little envy of the powerful men who get to break all the rules when it comes to women. The primary outcry is from other women who, in the name of equality and dignity, lament this continual pattern of abuse.

What often has been missing from this too-often repeated narrative is the condemnation of these behaviors and attitudes by other men—especially men who are in positions of power, authority, and influence. While the primary blame lies with the perpetrators, we should look next at the good men who say nothing. It's time for good men to hold accountable those who abuse women. Those who abuse, assault, and rape are not real men. They distort and destroy any sense of healthy manhood. It's time to tell our sons that they must never act like these abusers and perpetrators, and to make sure to raise our own sons to love, respect, and be faithful to women.

While many have provided ugly self-caricatures of the moral corruption of men in power, Donald Trump sums it up well. For example, the "Trump Rule," according to a book by a Miss USA pageant contestant, required that all contestants parade in front of Trump, the co-owner of the pageant, so that he could separate out those he found attractive. Trump once said this about his own daughter, Ivanka: "She does have a very nice figure ... if [she] weren't my daughter, perhaps I'd be dating her." And as if to demonstrate how oblivious to criticism (and good taste) he really

is, Trump once told *Esquire* magazine, "You know, it doesn't really matter what [the media] write as long as you've got a young and beautiful piece of [expletive]."

For me, men who treat women this way serve only one useful function: They serve as anti-role models for my two sons. They exemplify what I hope my boys will never become. So here is my little contribution to condemning men who need to be condemned for behaving badly: When TV shows with these unrepentant men come on, we will change the channel. When movies come out with them on the big screen, we will stay home. When sports games are played with them as stars, we won't be buying tickets. When another media story erupts because of more bad behavior, my boys will be told that men who abuse women are not real men. They might still have money and power, but their abuse of women diminishes their humanity.

Women are already speaking out, and now it's time for more men to also say that this bad behavior is not acceptable. More men must condemn men who treat women badly, not only as immoral and sometimes criminal, but also as the worst examples of what and who we are supposed to be. These men have given their humanity over to their animal impulses. I hope all of these recent revelations are lessons to politicians everywhere: Your sin will find you out.

We should publicly point out their bad and unacceptable behavior and punish their acts as an example to others. We need to establish as a firm principle: The abuse of women by men will not be tolerated. And the voices of more men need to join the chorus to make that perfectly clear. ■

Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners.

The abuse of women by men will not be tolerated.

still holding or running for political office; and they are still at the helm of the institutions of the economy and even the church.

Arnold Schwarzenegger, Donald Trump, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the (now former) chief of the International Monetary Fund, John Edwards, and Anthony Weiner have all been in the media lately for sins and crimes past, present, and accused. The stories have recently come out about a longtime affair Schwarzenegger had with a member of his house staff, Trump's long and blatant history of sexism, John Edwards's indictment for campaign finance law violations in covering up an affair, Anthony Weiner's tweeting lewd photos of himself, and, most gravely serious of all, Strauss-Kahn's alleged sexual assault against a hotel maid.

As the secret stories are revealed, the media exhibits great interest and

Tomas Bravo/Reuters



Peace Cartel

Relatives of people “disappeared” in the U.S.-Mexico war on drugs met Mexican poet Javier Sicilia in Torreon, Mexico, in June, during a week-long “Citizens Caravan for Peace with Justice and Dignity” addressing the failed, militarized drug war strategy. People of faith joined activists and victims of violence on a 12-state tour that also visited El Paso, Texas, demanding an end to the “Mérida Initiative” and that the U.S. reduce drug consumption as part of stopping the violence.

By Joslyn Williams

Empty Promises?

Walmart’s new urban strategy comes with a lousy track record.

WALMART HAS launched a charm offensive as part of its new urban strategy to impose smaller versions of its big box in inner cities across the country. It has proposed four stores for Washington, D.C.—all in predominantly minority, and most in low-income, neighborhoods.

The debate over building Walmart stores in D.C. is engaging intense public sentiment, and for good reason. While Walmart promises new jobs in a community, in reality it displaces other local businesses, leaving in question whether there is a net jobs gain; one study showed that for every retail job Walmart brought, communities lost 1.4 other jobs. In addition, Walmart passes on the cost of its low wages to taxpayers when associates and their families rely on publicly funded health care and other assistance programs.

Walmart promises D.C. 1,200 retail jobs and some 400 in the construction industry—but the company’s well-documented track

record is all the evidence the affected communities need to sound the alarm and demand proof for promises.

In Chicago, when Walmart made its first foray into the urban market, it made initial oral agreements for worker and community protections—pledges on which the big-box retailer later reneged. There was nothing in writing to force Walmart to live up to the promises that had won it a pass into the community.

The Washington Metropolitan Labor Council, aligning with community activists, environmentalists, clergy, and small businesses, has thrown down the gauntlet with a simple retort to Walmart: Respect D.C.

Our proposed community benefits agreement asks Walmart to commit, in writing, to responsible corporate citizenship. This means paying living wages, hiring and training D.C. residents, using responsible local contractors, protecting the city’s natural environment,

mitigating negative impacts on traffic and community safety, providing incentives and assistance to small businesses, and allowing local businesses opportunities to advertise and market products in Walmart stores.

Walmart’s reputation for labor abuses is legendary. In addition to being the subject of what was the largest class-action suit in U.S. history by female employees, the corporation has been forced to settle scores of employee wage-theft lawsuits and discrimination complaints.

Despite Walmart’s claim that their full-time workers in the area make an hourly wage of \$12.49, in reality many hourly employees at stores around the country and in the D.C. metro area have yet to attain that figure. Worse, many long-time workers never see that figure because Walmart systematically creates part-time positions to avoid paying standard wages and health benefits. According to an independent market research group, the average “associate” at Walmart makes \$8.81

Our Mission

The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

Business and Editorial Address

Please send all business and editorial correspondence to *Sojourners*,
3333 14th Street NW, Suite 200,
Washington, DC 20010.

Subscription and Change of Address

SUBSCRIBERS: Please print change of address on a card with old address label attached; send all subscription correspondence and address changes (except countries listed below) to *Sojourners*, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856, or email us at sojourners@cambeywest.com (allow six weeks to process any address change).
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Sojourners*, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856.

Subscription Rates

U.S.: \$39.95 one year (for first class mail, \$50).
Australia: \$78 one year (via air mail, paid in Australian currency, and sent to MediaCom, PO Box 610, Unley 5061 SA). **New Zealand:** \$97 one year (via air mail, paid in New Zealand currency, and sent to MediaCom, PO Box 9483, Wellington, NZ); email admin@mediacom.org.au. **UK and Ireland:** UK £30, IR £41 payable to *Sojourners* UK, and sent to *Sojourners* UK, 61 Axwell Park View, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE15 6NR; email Pam Swift at pam.swift@live.co.uk.
All other foreign surface (six to eight weeks delivery overseas): \$49.95 one year.
All other air service overseas (one to two weeks delivery): \$59.95 one year. Except where noted, payable in U.S. currency.

Newsstand Circulation

Newsstand circulation through Distictor Magazine Distribution Services.
For more information, call (905) 619-6565, fax (905) 619-2903, or email mraucci@distictor.com.

Advertising

For information on display advertising in *Sojourners*, please write to:
Advertising, *Sojourners*,
3333 14th Street NW, Suite 200,
Washington, DC 20010; advertising@sojo.net;
or visit www.sojo.net.

Submissions

Please direct poetry to the Poetry Editor (postal mail only, address below); books, music, and reviews to the Review Editor by post or at reviews@sojo.net; and query letters (400 words or fewer) for all other suggested articles to the Manuscript Editor by post or at queries@sojo.net. Please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope with postal submissions. Full writers guidelines: www.sojo.net/writers.

Printed in the U.S.A. on recycled paper.



All content copyright ©2011 *Sojourners*
3333 14th Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20010
Phone (202) 328-8842

per hour. Even if such a worker is allowed to work 34 hours a week, which is what Walmart considers full-time status, this equals only \$15,576 per year. In contrast, Walmart CEO Mike Duke received \$18.7 million in total compensation during 2010.

Walmart can easily afford to pay living wages and health care; a recent study by the Center for Labor Research and Education at the University of California at Berkeley established that if Walmart started paying a minimum wage of \$12 per hour to all its associates currently earning \$9 or less per hour, it would only raise the average cost of a visit to Walmart by 46 cents. A whopping 41.4

percent of such a pay increase would go to workers in families with total incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

In a city like D.C., where poverty rates have skyrocketed beyond the national averages, Walmart has the potential to greatly impact our future, for better or for worse.

More than just a fight against Walmart, this is a call for social justice; our city must demand the respect that it deserves. Walmart can afford to be a responsible corporate neighbor. D.C. cannot afford the alternative. ■

Joslyn Williams is president of the Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO.

By Marie Dennis

Terrible Twins

Hiroshima and Fukushima remind us that civilian and military nuclear technology go hand in hand.

TWO JAPANESE CITIES, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are synonymous with suffering, amazing strength, and an enduring commitment to peace. Words don't come easily to describe the emotions that surface at Hiroshima: Its tombstone buildings stand on holy ground where no one can ever forget the vaporizing blast that killed tens of thousands of people instantly in 1945—or the long torment that followed.

For more than 65 years, the idea that nuclear radiation would again decimate a region of Japan was inconceivable. But in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami in early March, the yet-unresolved accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant has brought back horrific memories and fear.

After decades of stagnation, particularly in the West, the nuclear power industry had seemed ready for a renaissance. In early 2011, 440 nuclear power reactors operated worldwide; more than 60 more were under construction. Two years ago in Prague, President Obama revived the vision of a world without nuclear weapons, but in the same speech advocated that the world "harness the power of nuclear energy on behalf of our efforts to combat climate change."

Then the Fukushima accident happened: a dramatic example of the natural world out of control, even in a country with highly sophisticated technical capacity. The possibility that

powerful natural events—the mammoth earthquake and tsunami—could overwhelm human safety precautions seems to have eluded decision-makers.

The fact that this accident happened in Japan—where nuclear technology had generated decades of human suffering—should have restored our lost humility, our sanity, and our commitment to live in harmony with the powerful forces of nature. Further, the relative proximity of Fukushima to Hiroshima and Nagasaki should reignite a serious debate about the links between nuclear power and nuclear weapons—a topic that has been off the table as we pursue carbon-free alternatives to fossil fuel, even as we also confront the possibility of nuclear terrorism.

A recent paper, *Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Energy—Siamese Twins or Double Zero Solution*, published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, notes the close relationship between the military and civilian uses of nuclear technology: "Knowledge, materials, and technology gained from the civilian use of nuclear technology can also be of use in a military nuclear program." For example, in 2005, according to the Arms Control Association, the United States transferred tritium produced in a commercial nuclear reactor to a Department of Energy facility in South Carolina for eventual use in nuclear weapons, challenging the practice of separating civilian

From the Archives

August 1974

Beyond Critique

THE CURRENT WOMEN'S movement was started in large part by women who had been active in civil rights and the antiwar movement. Their defense of the oppressed also finally came to include themselves. As one woman who had lived communally with a mixed group of political activists commented, "The women were liberated to chop wood while the men wrote and thought."

The modern women's movement accepted the basic ideas of equality that, because of Christianity, were self-evident in Western culture, but without the biblical basis or biblical imperative of discipleship. So the movement is often strong on critique with no positive direction or model to look to beyond the critique.

As Christians our critique of the subject/other dichotomy is based on both males and females being made in God's image, possessing a soul, and being common possessors of the Holy Spirit.

But beyond these basic biblical reasons for not allowing women to be objectified, we have a model for "differences within wholeness" in the body of Christ. The Christian is told not to be a respecter of persons because Christ wasn't. In the second great commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself," the Christian is told to abolish all categories of "other." To do that demands radical identification of the "other" with the "subject." And as this happens the "subject" becomes the self we are called to die to. ■

Sharon Gallagher was editor of Right On and a contributing editor for The Post American, the predecessor to Sojourners, when this article appeared.



and military nuclear operations.

The possibility of nuclear weapons proliferation arising from a civilian nuclear program is real. The Böll article asserts that, worldwide, these proliferation risks are particularly high around technologies for "uranium enrichment, reprocessing and plutonium separation, production of plutonium," and reactors using highly enriched uranium.

How non-state actors might use stolen technology or materials is also a major concern. It would be possible for them to build a crude nuclear weapon using publicly available information and materials stolen from an existing reactor; more likely, terrorist groups might attack a civilian nuclear facility or build a "dirty bomb," which spreads radioactive material using conventional explosives.

Every effort toward the abolition of nuclear weapons is important: The New START Treaty and the Comprehensive

Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, limited as they are, and Nuclear Weapons-Free Zones (NWFZ), including the new NWFZ in Africa, point in the right direction. The proposed Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, which would bind all nuclear powers to reduce their stocks of these materials, and the proposed Nuclear Weapons Convention, which would prohibit the development, testing, production, stockpiling, transfer, and threat of use of nuclear weapons, would move the world even closer to the peace that the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki so ardently seek.

A serious look at the connections between nuclear weapons and nuclear power has to be part of this process. ■

Marie Dennis is the co-president of Pax Christi International and director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns in Washington, D.C.

By Andy Shallal

Building a Better Company

The B Corporation model puts social and environmental responsibility into companies' legal DNA.

BEING A SOCIAL entrepreneur used to be a lonely endeavor. I grew up believing that to be in business meant leaving your soul at the front door—being ruthless, shrewd, and above all focused on profitability at any cost. But as a businessman, I found myself less interested in the bottom line of profit than in the bot-

stomping ground for some of the early 20th century's most notable African Americans, including Duke Ellington, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston. But in the wake of the 1968 riots following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the once-thriving social and cultural mecca of the African-

The framework makes it a legal requirement to be mindful of employees, the community, and the environment.

tom line of community impact. For example, I started Busboys and Poets as a restaurant and gathering place, but also a social enterprise—a business with a conscience—in Washington, D.C.'s U Street neighborhood.

Having grown up in D.C., I was amazed at the dramatic changes that swept various neighborhoods in the 1990s. The U Street corridor in particular was undergoing some of the most vivid transformation.

Dubbed "Black Broadway" back in the early '40s and '50s, this neighborhood was the lifeline for the African-American community in a racially segregated city. It was the

American community became a drug haven, as businesses shuttered their windows and went elsewhere.

The boom of the 1990s brought about a huge influx of young white professionals and new buildings and businesses, all taking advantage of relatively low real estate prices. I remember driving on U Street, awestruck at the dramatic shift. I did a double take when, at the base of a new apartment building named in honor of the great composer and bandleader Duke Ellington, I saw a tanning salon. The tension around such a business was palpable. "These people just

don't get it," an African-American friend confided. "This is the ugly head of gentrification showing itself; they're trying to erase our history," another added.

It was comments like these that planted the seed for *Busboys and Poets*. Our tribal statement articulates that we are a community where racial and cultural connections are consciously uplifted—a space where art, culture, and politics intentionally collide. I believe that by creating such a space, we can inspire social change and begin to transform our community and the world.

But I used to think: Am I the only businessperson who thinks this way? I started seeking like-minded entrepreneurs—individuals who were more interested in mission statements than profit and loss statements. This is what led me to the B Corporation model.

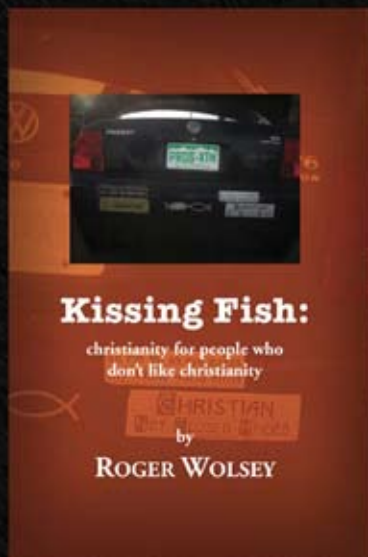
I first learned about it at a conference for social entrepreneurs. Created in 2007 and administered by the nonprofit B Lab, the B Corporation model is unique in that it sets up a legal framework for businesses that are here for the long haul. The framework, which all certified B Corporations must adopt, makes it a legal requirement, rather than an option, for the corporation to be mindful of the triple bottom line: responsibility not only for the financial health of the company but, just as important, to the environment, to the employees, and to the community.

The B Corporation Impact Assessment, which all B Corporations must complete (and 10 percent of which are audited each year), helps businesses better understand the ingredients and standards of socially responsible businesses. It quantifies the triple bottom line and provides benchmarks for better businesses to reach.

Every B Corporation leader I've met is out to change the world—to make his or her community and the planet more livable. The model is one that not only validates best practices but also helps to assuage the dissonance inherent in the Wall Street model, which separates business practices from real community impact. Most important, it has given my business the structural DNA necessary to grow while maintaining its values. ■

*Andy Shallal is an artist and the entrepreneur behind *Busboys and Poets* and *Eatonville*, restaurants in Washington, D.C.*

Like Jesus but not not so sure about Christianity?



You'll LOVE Kissing Fish!

christianity for people who don't like christianity

"This book offers a much needed invitation to discover the joy, love, and compassionate justice that lie at the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

— author Wes Howard-Brook

Check out a free excerpt and order your copy today at:

progressivechristianitybook.com



*As Christ welcomes all.
we welcome you.*

We welcome your curiosity.

We welcome your experiences.

We welcome your theological journey.

**Louisville
Seminary**

800.264.1839 | www.lpts.edu

**Sonja Williams | Berea, KY
Master of Divinity graduate (2011)**

Partnering for a New Beginning

IN 1999, I was in the midst of launching Interfaith Youth Core, the organization I lead today. One day I received an email from a young man in Jordan named Anas. He wrote, “I found your website, and I want to start an interfaith youth project.”

We quickly fell into a rhythm, where I would send him our latest curriculum on interfaith service projects and he would send me photos of the projects he ran, which we would post on our website. Anas and I finally met in person when I traveled to Jordan five years later. I was there on other business and decided to look him up in my spare time, fully expecting that he had gone onto other things.

He both surprised and inspired me. He brought the latest photos on interfaith projects he was leading across the Arab regions and around the Mediterranean, and a copy of the book he had written; he told me about his plans to run for parliament.

I asked him, “Tell me how you got here.” And he replied very simply, “You emailed me back.”

The biggest thing Anas taught

The fate of the 21st century will be decided by civic leader-to-civic leader relations in a global context.

me was not the power of the Internet to connect a globalized world (though this is true) or the bridges that are built through interfaith action (though this is also true). Anas taught me that the fate of the 21st century was going to be decided not just by government-to-government relations, but by civic leader-to-civic leader relations in a global context.

President Obama affirmed this in his May speech addressing the Middle East and North Africa,



saying: “The greatest untapped resource in the Middle East and North Africa is the talent of its people.”

This is a shift from what political analysts saw when they assessed the region as recently as last year. Opening a newspaper or a foreign policy journal, I would read about political dictatorships, sectarian civil societies, stagnant economies, the “youth bulge,” and the recruiting talents of pervasive extremist groups. It seemed as though it was effectively a black hole of conflict.

But the tone has changed now. What people didn’t count on then, and what Obama has pointed out, was that the youth bulge was not simply a passive recipient of economic and political forces, but instead a cadre of agents who realized they could transform the status quo. From here on out, we can and should look at the region through that lens.

I recently returned from a summit in Washington, D.C., of Partners for a New Beginning (PNB), a collection of public-private partnerships committed to broadening and deepening engagement between the U.S. and Muslim communities abroad. PNB’s global actors

gathered to share commitments, strategize on key issues, and form new partnerships. From Turkey to Morocco and Israel/Palestine to Egypt, civil society leaders and entrepreneurs are working together across lines of country and continent to build new economies, stronger civil societies, and better futures.

Of course, this moment has come at a price. Innocent lives have been lost; citizens and journalists tortured; families torn apart. It’s impossible to tell what will happen in the days ahead. What we do know is that for communities to thrive, we will always need more jobs, better schools, fresh ideas, and robust cooperation. There are entrepreneurs across the region working to make this happen, and it’s our responsibility to partner with them to support their work—always remembering humbly that freedom isn’t America’s gift to the world, it’s God’s gift to humankind; and that entrepreneurship isn’t an American invention, but it’s something we can be a great partner on. ■



Eboo Patel is founder of the Interfaith Youth Core and author of Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation.



SYLVIA WILL MISS 5 DAYS OF SCHOOL THIS MONTH BECAUSE SHE DOESN'T HAVE SANITARY PADS.

ZanaAfrica is producing affordable, eco-friendly sanitary pads so that girls in Africa like Sylvia can have 45 more days a year in the classroom.

Learn how a simple product can
improve Sylvia's future at
zanaa.org/pads



www.zanaa.org · ©2011 ZanaAfrica, all rights reserved. ZanaAfrica is a public 501(c)3 charity.

JOIN OUR
PARTNERS:



G92

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

★ ★ ★
CARLOS CAMPO . GALEN CAREY . LISA SHARON HARPER
SHANE CLAIBORNE . RICHARD LAND . ALEJANDRO MANDES
EVE NUNEZ . JASON L. RILEY . MATTHEW SOERENS
JIM WALLIS . JENNY HWANG-YANG . AND MORE

IMMIGRATION CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 20-22, 2011 . CEDARVILLE UNIVERSITY . CEDARVILLE, OHIO . CEDARVILLE.EDU/G92

'YOUR DAUGHTERS WILL PROPHECY'

**In the new South Africa, the future is speaking
in the voices of the girls.**

When I write, I can put any word that fits my sentence. I can feel any kind of emotion I want to go through. And I find that I am able to heal myself with my own words.

—Ntombizanele, age 18



NTOMBIZANELE HATES her voice. It sounds like she's getting over a sore throat, low and gravelly as an unpaved road. She's self-conscious about it, as most any 18-year-old would be, and didn't use it much when I first met her. When she did speak, I had to lean forward and concentrate to hear what she had to say. Her name means "no more girls" in Xhosa. She's the second daughter.

Ntombi, as she's called, lost her mother to AIDS several years ago. (To respect privacy, I've chosen to use first names only in this story.) Now she and her three siblings live with two aunts and many cousins in a small house in Gugulethu, a black township outside Cape Town. In December 2009, Ntombi completed Grade 12 but failed two of her matriculation final exams, math and science. So she could not receive her "matric," South Africa's high school diploma. Without school or a job to occupy her days, she fell into a pattern. Each week began on Monday with a trip in an overcrowded minibus taxi from Gugulethu into Cape Town to visit the public library. She would check out seven books, the maximum number allowed, all fantasy and romance novels. Then she returned home, crawled into bed, and read. She spent every day this way, sometimes finishing all those books in two days.

I came to know Ntombi when she joined the creative writing club for girls that I established in Gugulethu in February 2010. On Saturday afternoons for a year, anywhere from four to 22 girls, ages 13 through 20, gathered at J.L. Zwane Presbyterian Church and Community Centre. At our first meeting, we brainstormed and named the club Amazw'Entombi. It means "voices of the girls" in the Xhosa language, which most of them spoke before they learned English.

Each week, with the help of a prompt—a phrase or a short piece of writing that gets you started—the girls and I wrote. Just keep your hand moving, I told them from the beginning. Keep putting words on the page. Don't worry if you're doing it "right." We built up from an initial three minutes of writing to, eventually, 20 minutes and sometimes longer when the girls asked. Then we would go around the circle where we sat and read aloud what each wrote.

With a quiet demeanor and large lovely eyes, Ntombi paid attention to everything going on around her. At first she refused to read aloud. Couldn't listen to the sound of her own voice, she said. After a few weeks of encouragement from the other girls, she gave it a try. The week's prompt: "I need to find a place."

Phola and Sive, right, are members of the writing club at Bridges Academy, a boarding school for orphans in Franschhoek, South Africa.





I'm not sure if it was after my mother's death or before when I started longing to find a place of my own where I can just be me and have peace all around me. I usually dream about this place that has a need in my soul. I always find myself to be the only person that exists in this beautiful colorful land. Sometimes I feel very happy to be in this place alone and sometimes it scares the bits out of me. In this place I feel that this is the way the world was supposed to be.

I noticed the smile she tried to suppress as her peers applauded her reading.

THEY ARE KNOWN as “the Born Frees,” this first generation of black South Africans coming of age after apartheid. The oldest girls in the Amazw'Entombi writing club were born in 1990, the year Nelson Mandela walked free from prison and the breakdown of apartheid accelerated. South Africa held its first democratic elections in April 1994. These girls are coming of age in a proudly proclaimed “Rainbow Nation” that purportedly embraces all South Africans.

Yet, along with freedom, the Born Frees inherited a country plagued by poverty and extreme levels of income disparity, violence, unemployment, and one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in the world. Young women ages 15 to 24 are three times more likely to be HIV-positive than young men. Several girls

in Amazw'Entombi are HIV positive. South Africa as a nation has progressed farther in development than any other in sub-Saharan Africa, and it proudly demonstrated that progress by successfully hosting a spectacular World Cup. Yet, steep obstacles stand between opportunities and girls like Ntombi, in places like Gugulethu.

It is one of the oldest townships in Cape Town. During apartheid, the government



A neighborhood in Gugulethu township.

instituted the Group Areas Act, assigning parcels of land where people would live based—as everything was—on skin color. In the early 1960s, black South Africans were rounded up and transported out from the City Bowl to the Cape Flats, a newly declared blacks-only area of scrublands and sand dunes.

Parts of Gugulethu have something of

a middle-class feel, with modest concrete homes, some with added second floors and satellite dishes attached. Then there are the “informal settlements.” The phrase makes the shacks in these areas sound temporary, but they are not. They are home to thousands of people. Wooden planks and plastic tarps stretched to their limit form walls that offer neither insulation nor protection from the winter rains. Hefty rocks and old tires hold down corrugated iron-sheet ceilings to keep them from blowing away in the powerful Cape Town winds. Several shacks share electrical wires dangerously spliced from the source. One communal water pump outside serves hundreds of homes. The girls of Amazw'Entombi live in both the concrete homes and in the informal settlements.

To confront 21st century challenges, Gugulethu and South Africa would do well to turn to the girl-child, as their elders call them. Increasingly, global poverty scholars and experts are trumpeting “the Girl Effect” as the key to development. In 2005, the United Nations Foundation and the Nike Foundation formed the Coalition for Adolescent Girls, which now includes more than 30 leading international organizations. It promotes the belief that, when girls are educated, healthy, and financially literate, they will play a key role in ending generations of poverty.



The girls of Amazw'Entombi pose after the Saturday afternoon writing club at J.L. Zwane Presbyterian Church near Cape Town, South Africa.

When women earn an income, 90 percent of those wages are reinvested in the family, compared with 30 to 40 percent for wages earned by men. And the effects of *not* paying heed to girls' potential can be devastating on a national level. According to coalition member Plan International, the economic cost to 65 low- and middle-income and transitional countries of failing to educate girls to the same standard as boys is a staggering \$92 billion each year.

Last March, more than 1,000 supporters and advocates attended a conference for the humanitarian organization CARE, which now focuses its work on women and girls. Keynote speaker Melanne Verveer, ambassador-at-large for global women's issues at the U.S. State Department, called investment in girls' education the single most positive step a country can take to drive its economic development.

"No country can get ahead by leaving half of their population behind," Verveer said. "Women and girls are the world's greatest untapped resource, and investing in them is one of the most powerful forces for international development."

First they must be noticed and heard. Last year, the International Center for Research on Women released a report, *Girls*

Speak: A New Voice in Global Development, one in a series focused on adolescent girls. Its first recommendation to policymakers and program managers: Listen to girls.

"[L]earn about their aspirations, and engage them in decision-making processes. Shift the paradigm from working *for* adolescent girls to working *with* them as partners. Listen to girls' unique insights into their lives and work alongside them to achieve their goals."

THE WRITING CLUB I started was not meant to be a "Girl Effect" development project. But creative outlets are rarely offered through township schools, which still lack resources in an educational system that remains inequitable. Many schools do not even have libraries. I knew from previous travel in South Africa that children and youth respond enthusiastically to arts education brought in by volunteers. I was curious to see if girls would embrace creative writing and what difference it could make in helping them identify their strengths and name the challenges they face. Every week, our two-hour Saturday sessions showed me how eager they are to rally their own voices.

Like Ntombi, these are bright, articulate girls who pay close attention to the world



Who Am I?

I am a writer by birth
A vocalist by choice
An expressionist by nature
And an instrument by voice.

I pledge to speak my mind
And utter the words that define
My solitude, senses, and space.

I pledge to provoke all existing
Thought and explore every and
Any feeling and emotion of all
Human race.

—Annasueni, age 18
Gugulethu, South Africa



I Wish Someone Had Told Me

TIME AND TIME again people had told me to stop worrying. Stop crying. Kuzolunga, it's going to be all right. That night when I was told my dad died, that was all they could say. It's going to be all right. It'll be okay. Everything happens for a reason and it's going to be okay.

So I stopped crying, I stopped worrying. I stopped feeling the hurt. I stopped feeling the pain and for weeks I stopped doing just about anything. I stopped laughing. I stopped talking for weeks to months on end. I stopped thinking and feeling. Feeling what I wanted to feel, thinking what I wanted to think. I pushed all my emotions back so that it wouldn't be so hard to do what I wanted to do in the whole world.

Because of that, I eventually forgot what my father even looked like. Forgot his eyes. Forgot his smile. Funny, huh? Because that smile of his was the only thing that would lighten up my day. I didn't do what I really wanted to do. Because I didn't cry. Because I didn't feel the hurt, feel the pain inside, I almost forgot the one thing that my father had left me: the memories. His eyes. His smile.

Because of that, I really wish that someone had told me that it was okay to cry. It was okay to feel the hurt, feel the pain. But you know what I really wish someone had told me, so that I could always remember his face, his eyes, his smile? I really wish someone had told me that it was okay to miss him.

—Gugu, age 16
Gugulethu, South Africa

around them. In "The Day I'll Never Forget," 16-year-old Ayanda wrote about the xenophobia that has plagued South Africa in recent years.

In my community, foreigners were killed by the citizens of Gugulethu. These foreigners were from upper Africa, from Congo, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Namibia. These foreigners were killed by other black people. I saw a Somali man being stabbed till death. He was running away saying, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. They stabbed him and burned his wife to death. I don't understand how a black person can kill another black person without a valid reason. The foreigners were labeled as makwerekwere [a derogatory term for non-South African blacks]. I was angry when I saw this happening. I felt the pain.

During our discussion after her reading, another one of the girls pointed out that countries such as Zimbabwe and Zambia welcomed South African exiles during the bleak apartheid years. Now those countries' refugees, searching for a better life in South Africa, face the destruction of their homes and small businesses, stabbings, and the return of "necklacing." This despicable practice involves filling a tire with gasoline, placing it around a person's neck or chest, and lighting it on fire. It was used to "execute" blacks thought to be collaborators with the apartheid government during the 1980s and early 1990s. Now it's meant to punish those competing for scarce jobs.

There is a growing black middle class in urban South Africa today. But it's overshadowed by the rise of a much smaller number of elite, wealthy people perched at the top of business and politics, among whom, some feel, materialism is running rampant, after so many years of deprivation. BMWs and Mercedes are making their way into Gugulethu. Mzoli's, a popular *braai*, or barbecue, restaurant is packed every weekend with local residents and some bolder tourists, the place to see and be seen. Julius Malema, the 30-year-old rabble-rousing leader of the African National Congress Youth League, wears a Breitling watch worth R250,000 (about \$38,000) as he rallies young people to stand up for their rights by singing "Shoot the Boer!"—a historical reference to white Afrikaners. The generation he is addressing, 15- to 24-year-olds, has the country's highest unemployment rate, at 51 percent.

The girls confront these consumerist pressures in ways that are sometimes unexpected. Sharon, who is 20, struggles between

her own dreams and a responsibility to her family for their needs and desires. After completing a two-year program in business training that she did not enjoy, she wanted to apply to the University of Cape Town (UCT), one of Africa's best. Her grandmother and mother wanted her to get a job, bring in money, and help build on to a house overcrowded with family members. She must respectfully explain to her elders, who had no opportunities for further study themselves, why an education now can pay off later, why it's best to hold off on that addition to the house. It's enough to make her want to return to childhood.

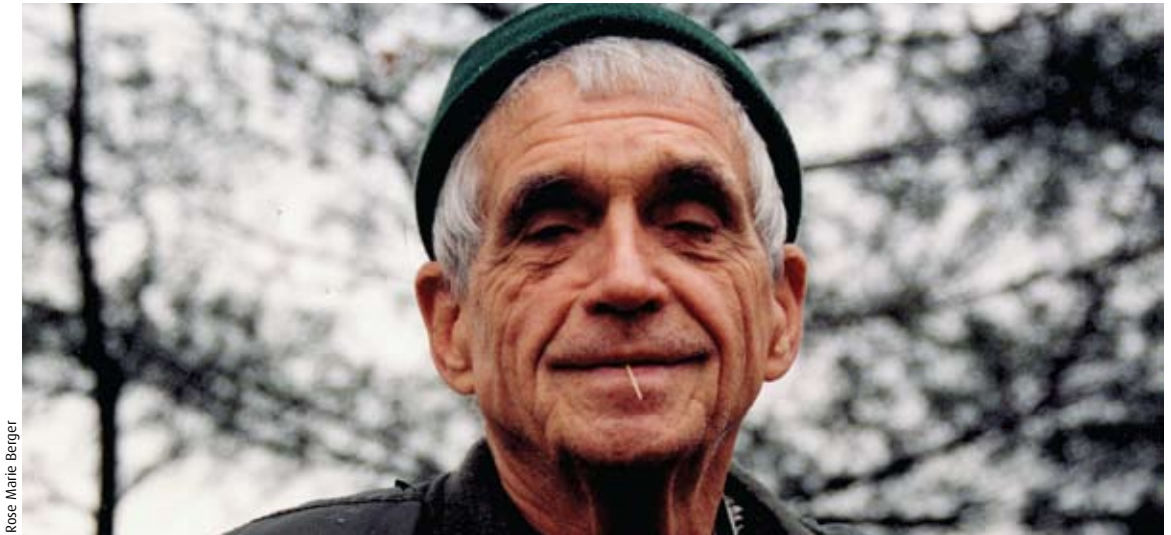
It's amazing how I always used to dream of finally having the power to decide what I want. The time has come now, and I'm battling with it ... Understand this: When you have the power to make a decision, you also have the power to disappoint people, maybe even your parents. And I don't know about you guys, but that's the thing that I am most afraid of. That the decisions I make will disappoint the people who care about me the most.

Sharon fought through that fear. In February, she began studying psychology at UCT. She is the first person in her family to attend university.

WITH AMAZW'ENTOMBI, I saw the difference that listening, encouragement, and claiming her own voice can make for a young woman. Ntombi in particular showed me. Overcoming her initial silence, she soon became the first volunteer to read after each week's writing exercise. She told me she doesn't "do" clubs, and then grew into a leader in both Amazw'Entombi and in the church youth group. She learned that, even without her matric, she could apply for vocational training programs at the College of Cape Town campus in Gugulethu. Now she's enrolled in a one-year course in jewelry making, a potential career in tourist-clogged Cape Town. After watching her close friend Sharon accepted into UCT, she has also begun talking about retaking those math and science matric exams, so she might apply to university herself to study communications.

Ntombi still doesn't like her voice. But now she's not at all shy about using it. ■

Kimberly Burge, a Sojourners contributing writer and a 2010 Fulbright Scholar to South Africa, is currently writing a book about Amazw'Entombi and the girls of Gugulethu.



Rose Marie Berger

Giving Voice

(for Daniel Berrigan on his ninetieth birthday)

the heart dares the word dares the page
lest love stick in the throat of this pen,
and go untold

i remember my name
in your voice
echoing down the underground hall
beneath niebuhr place:
come, crack a jar of scotch
come for talk and a minted brew of tea
come to life. wake. arise.
(an ascent follows, sweet and rash)

somehow that calling
pipes through the kentucky hills retreat.
while i practiced sport, before smoke rose from detroit
your prayer with louis and circle
breached the walls to fall also on me.
summoning unbeknownst an answer.

(later, in a season of crushing dark
you opened for me the gatehouse door
there to walk and breathe and eat the psaltery
to face dread dreams and heal)

confess a thing:
even on this island now
the tabletalk of poet and keeper
hatches the seminary renegade.
that heady charismatic anarchy
revives as we speak
and our once fresh formation
turns, can it be, to eldery.

as toward the body politic
flesh of word presented,
burning with truth the charnel house lies,
this blood on pillars gashing gold vermillion,
or hammer nailing it to the door of church and state.
in consequence, this bravery with a difference
the holy ghost gone militant
free in the cuff, in the dock, in the yard

for all
for missives kited in and out
for the discipline of hope
for drinking the moon underground
for writing on the wall, against it
for bread in lotus fingers

all echoes in the heart at dusk
footfalls on the way beloved

this thanks untellable

Bill Wylie-Kellermann, a United Methodist pastor who serves St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Detroit, was mentored as a seminarian by Catholic poet and peace activist Daniel Berrigan, SJ.



'WE ARE ALL ONE'

Around the world, religious freedom is under threat—but people of faith continue to reach across the divides.

Hassan opened several letters and his eyes filled with tears as he caught the gist of the messages. "People were praying for us?" Hassan asked. "Thousands were praying all over the world," Andrew answered. "That explains it. There were times when I felt I couldn't go on anymore, and then I would feel a power beyond me as though there were others who were taking my suffering and carrying it for me." Andrew was moved by these words. "Hassan, that is exactly what happens. The scriptures say that when one part of the body suffers, all suffer. We are called to share in one another's suffering. When it is more than you can bear, there are others who, prompted by the Holy Spirit, pray for you and somehow remove some of that burden from you."

IN THAT PASSAGE from *Secret Believers*, written by Brother Andrew and Al Janssen, Hassan represents a composite of thousands of Christians in numerous countries persecuted and imprisoned for no other reason than their faith in Jesus Christ.

For half a century the Dutch Christian called Brother Andrew has been ministering to persecuted Christians—in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, China, and now the Middle East. I met Brother Andrew in Bethlehem, where he asked me to pray for him as he headed to Gaza. At a time when many Christians seem to view Muslims as the ultimate enemy, Brother Andrew sees them as God-seekers who need the love of Jesus manifested through his followers who extend the hand of friendship. He reveals his own sincere love for Muslims—even extremists—as he visits them, hears their anguish, and respectfully presents the living Christ to them.

A pastor I met in Egypt reflected the influence of Brother Andrew when I asked him what he viewed as the biggest obstacles to peace in the Middle East. "The rise of Muslim extremists," he said, "and the failure of Christians to love." Knowing that a spirit of division and hostility did not honor God, that pastor initiated a weekly all-night prayer meeting for the soul of his country. For more than six years, hundreds of Christians in his city prayed for better relationships with Muslims and for the opportunity to show them the love of Christ.

As the January 25 revolution unfolded in Cairo, many of these praying Christians found their way to Tahrir Square, thanking God for the spirit of solidarity with which Christians and Muslims joined hands on behalf of their country. Days later, in the aftermath of the revolution, those same praying Christians invited Muslims who had lost loved ones during the revolution to their church service, so they could honor them for their sacrifice. YouTube videos show veiled Muslim women seated in church pews with their new Christian friends.

Sadly, news from Egypt in the following weeks carried reports of renewed

Egyptian Christians hold a blood-stained portrait of Jesus during a protest in January outside a Coptic Christian church in Alexandria, following a New Year's Eve car bomb attack in which 21 people were killed.

Mohammed Abed/Getty Images



The biggest obstacles to peace in the Middle East, he said, are Muslim extremists and “the failure of Christians to love.”

The annual Caravan Festival of the Arts in Cairo celebrates connections between Christians and Muslims. Above, “The Greatest Love,” by Syrian artist Al Assmaa Essam Takieddine. At right, English artist Julie Klimentos’ “All the Same.”

sectarian violence. As I write, Egyptian Christians are grieving the burning of two churches in a poor neighborhood of Cairo called Imbaba. According to a friend in Cairo, rumors about a Muslim woman held against her will in one of the churches sparked the burnings and violence in which seven Christians and five Muslims died, and hundreds were injured.

According to my friend in Cairo, the Egyptian masses responded to the Imbaba tragedy with shock and sadness. “Once again,” he wrote, “there were proactive demonstrations of religious solidarity and unity, which in my experience here is the true heart of the majority of the Egyptian people. It was moving to see veiled women with the cross painted on their *niqab* (face veil) parading throughout the streets saying, ‘We are all one hand—Muslim and Christian.’” Later, Muslims joined in helping to restore the icons in the burned churches.

Under the Mubarak regime mosques could be built without constraint, but it was very difficult for Christians to get permission to build new churches or even restore current buildings. But the transitional government has promised that within 30 days it would “equalize” the law regarding building houses of worship. In a related move, the prime minister’s council announced it will reopen all 48 churches closed for “security reasons” under Mubarak. Within one week, a decree was

issued to open 16 of the churches.

Just a week after the tragic church burning, St. John’s church in Cairo hosted an interfaith event, the Caravan Festival of the Arts. Using the arts to build bridges, the festival centered around a visual art exhibition of approximately 50 premier Muslim and Christian artists who produced work on the theme of “My Neighbor,” based on injunctions found in the gospels and the Quran. Thousands attended the festival, including delegations of Muslim imams. “It was most encouraging,” wrote my friend, “to see over half of the church filled with Muslims discussing and celebrating what we have in common.”

“Yes, there are tensions,” he continued. “But every day there is more and more encouraging news.”

STILL, CHRISTIANS IN Egypt and elsewhere know that the collapse of an oppressive regime is not always good news for religious freedom. The situation for Christians in Iraq has deteriorated considerably since the fall of Saddam Hussein. In the anti-Western atmosphere in Iraq, Christians are seen as collaborators with Westerners. As Western military presence dwindles, extremists take advantage of the situation to terrorize Christians and force them out of the country. Last October, gunmen stormed Our Lady of Salvation

Church in Baghdad during Sunday Mass, killing 51 worshipers. In December, a series of bombings targeted homes of Christians, killing at least three and wounding more than a dozen. This past Easter, an explosive detonated near Sacred Heart Church in Baghdad, and a fire broke out in front of another church. Thankfully, no one was killed in those attacks, but fear runs high and Christians continue to leave the country. Under Saddam Hussein there were an estimated 1.5 million Christians in Iraq. Today there is less than half that number.

In Pakistan, Christians make up less than 5 percent of the population of 187 million, and they are clustered in poor neighborhoods on the outskirts of cities where militant extremism is sharply increasing. In March, Shahbaz Bhatti, the only Christian cabinet minister in the Pakistani government, was shot dead, two months after the assassination of another liberal politician. Both men had called publicly for changes to the blasphemy law, which mandates the death penalty for those guilty of speaking against the prophet Muhammad.

A controversial Algerian law introduced in 2006 requires all churches to register with the government, but when church leaders attempt to comply they receive no response. Recently, Algerian officials decreed the closure of seven churches. As of this writing, Algerian Christians are requesting prayer that the law will be repealed or the procedures necessary for compliance will be put in place.

In China, the threat created by revolutions sweeping the Middle East led to increased government oppression of unregistered “house churches.” An Easter crackdown on the Shouwang Church in Beijing left 1,000 worshipers without a place to meet and their leaders imprisoned or under house arrest. Despite such hardships, the 80 million Christians in China continue to see their influence grow, particularly among the young and educated.

THE WORLD WATCH LIST ranks 50 countries where persecution of Christians is worst. The top violators on the list are North Korea and Iran. Third is Afghanistan, a country of 28 million people, where there are very few Christians.

A deeply religious and reflexively volatile country, Afghanistan has long been highly reactive to perceived insults against Islam.

In 2005, a one-paragraph item in *Newsweek* that suggested guards at Guantanamo Bay had flushed a Quran down the toilet set off three days of riots that left 17 people dead. In 2006, 200 people, including nine Afghans, were killed in response to a Danish cartoon lampooning the prophet Muhammad. In June 2010, the deputy secretary of parliament called for the execution of Christian converts after the baptism of Afghan Christians was shown on TV. In August of that year, 10 Christian aid workers were killed by the Taliban.

More recently, thousands of protesters overran the United Nations compound in



Mazar-i-Sharif after three angry mullahs urged them to avenge the Quran burning that was overseen by Florida pastor Terry Jones. Unable to find Americans on whom to vent their anger, the mob turned instead on the next-best symbol of “Western intrusion” and killed 12 people, including seven international U.N. workers and five Afghans.

As I have read articles and perused websites on persecuted Christians, such as www.opendoorsusa.org, I have been grieved by the plight of the oppressed; impressed by their strength and perseverance; humbled by their obedience to Jesus’ command to love our neighbors and our enemies; and challenged to lighten their burden by praying for them and advocating on their behalf. I’ve also seen more clearly how what we, as Americans, do has implications for our brothers and sisters throughout the world. Whether it’s in foreign policy or individual actions, when we make offensive mistakes, Christians in Afghanistan, India, China, or Egypt will probably pay.

Perhaps most important, I’ve learned how critical religious freedom is—for people of all faiths—and that we as Christians should be the most ardent defenders of the

freedom of all persons to choose their faith, or no faith at all, without coercion.

Chris Seiple, president of the Institute for Global Engagement, an NGO that promotes religious freedom throughout the world, says, “We believe that the freedom to choose, to change, to share, or to reject faith is the foremost gift from a gift-giving God. We believe that we become more in God’s likeness the more we work for those made in his image—no matter what they believe ... Put differently, I can’t love God unless I love my neighbor, and that love begins with the opportunity for him/her to believe something different than I do.”

In 2008, Rick Love, president of Peace Catalyst International, gathered evangelical leaders from around the world to discuss the increasing alienation between Muslims and Christians. They concluded that they needed to defend the right of both Christians and Muslims to express their faith respectfully. “Thus,” they wrote, “we stand against all forms of religious persecution toward Muslims, Christians, or anyone else. God

desires all people to make faith choices based on conscience and conviction rather than any form of coercion or violence (2 Corinthians 4:2).”

In a Christian-majority country, we Christians take religious freedom for granted. But what about our Muslim neighbors? When the local mosque is refused a building permit for a Muslim community center or worship space, do we rejoice that the “enemy” has been defeated, or do we try to put ourselves in the place of the sincere Muslim believer? My answer to that question is undoubtedly impacted by the fact that one of the gentlest, wisest, most peace-loving men I know is a Muslim businessman currently involved in a mosque-building debate in a suburb not far from where I live. I’ve come to believe that as a Christian I should be as diligent in fighting for his religious freedom as I am for my Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world. ■

Lynne Hybels, a Sojourners contributing editor and co-founder of Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois, is author of Nice Girls Don’t Change the World.



ENDING THE HUNGER SEASON

How a Florida nonprofit is nurturing the abundant life, one rooftop at a time.



IT'S EIGHT O'CLOCK in the morning and I am standing at the base of perhaps the only mountain in southwest Florida. Actually, it's more of a hill. According to the plaque in front of me, this 50-foot-high, bulldozer-built mound is called the Tropical Highlands.

The plaque's description reads: "Steep land subject to severe eroding."

Joel Wildasin is the intern in charge of this part of the Global Farm, part of the Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization, or ECHO. He points uphill to the right to several terraces, a good method to slow erosion, but on the hill's left side is a better system. It's called SALT: Sloping Agricultural Land Technology, an intercropping pattern that alternates perennial hedgerows with annual cash crops. According to the folks here at ECHO, the SALT system outperforms terraces when growing crops on steep tropical hillsides.

I carefully study the left-hand slope. At first the overall effect is one of contained chaos; there are just too many different kinds of plants here to make sense of. Then I begin to see. There are three hedgerows roughly 75 feet long and spaced at intervals of 12 feet, each hugging the slope's contour. Within the hedgerows are at least four or five species of shrubs and trees. As perennial polycultures the hedgerows serve many purposes. They keep soil and water on the slope. They attract insect-eating birds. Some of the hedgerow plants fix nitrogen. Others, such as fish-poison bean (tephrosia) and neem tree, have insecticidal uses. With these hedgerows you're growing both your own fertilizer and your own insecticides, cash crops in between. Wildasin points out the demonstration plots of strawberries nestled comfortably among the

hedgerows on the 20-degree slope. This SALT plot is a carefully designed system, one that mimics a natural ecosystem's polyculture, where each interlinking part supports and enhances its neighbor.

This kind of agricultural clear-headedness has gained ECHO the respect of development organizations around the world. Here nature is not a series of problems that stand in the way of human agriculture, but a model—a standard—on which to base that agriculture. Places like this will become tiny arks to which people will turn when the waters of trouble—climate change, fossil fuel depletion, and the resulting food shortages—start to rise. For that reason ECHO's Global Farm is much more than just a place to teach food-growing techniques for the tropics. It is a model for how humans can not only survive coming catastrophes, but flourish.

Wildasin and the others at ECHO are hopeful because they know what bounty the land can produce, even in places as desolate as Keefa, Mauritania, where ECHO's CEO Stan Doerr and his wife, Beth, helped plant 200 tire gardens in what was once a desert. "Redemption doesn't just start after we die," said ECHO's agriculture research director Dr. Tim Motis. "We can begin to experience life in all its abundance right here on earth."

"Abundance" is a word I heard often on the lips of ECHO workers. They aren't just trying to end hunger; they want to help people tap into creation's fecundity, an abundance in nature that was there all along, waiting to be discovered and shared.

WHEN BBC AMERICA aired its story on the global food crisis of 2008, it wasn't the Food and Agriculture Organization or the World Food Program they profiled; it was ECHO. "As many countries face the increasing struggle to feed their

ECHO teaches techniques for using salvaged objects to create manageable gardens. At left, strawberries planted in a discarded tire at ECHO's demonstration facility in Florida.



They aren't just trying to end hunger; they want to help people tap into the abundance in nature that was there all along.

people,” the anchor said, “one organization based here in the U.S. is trying to lend a helping hand.”

ECHO's 50-acre campus lies just north of the Caloosahatchee River. An interdenominational Christian organization, ECHO was founded in 1981 and now serves as a tropical agricultural training center for development workers in 180 countries. With the global food crisis continuing to worsen, ECHO is increasingly looked to as an organization with answers. Its mission is “to network with community leaders in developing countries to seek hunger solutions for families growing food under difficult conditions.” That last part about “difficult conditions” is where the group really shines; staff members here have become experts at growing crops in the harsh environments—deserts, eroded hillsides, slum roof-tops—in which the very poor often live. They describe their organization as “an extension agent to the world,” especially to developing countries that don't have resources such as land grant universities and extension agents. Considering that 75 percent of the world's poor live in rural areas with limited communication, that's a big gap to fill for an organization based in southwest Florida. Yet with nearly 40 staff—a fourth of whom are scientists—and 400 volunteers, ECHO essentially is a land grant university, albeit one that doesn't take federal money.

In addition to research, ECHO provides free consulting for development workers. If you're stumped with an irrigation problem in Zambia and need some advice, you can email an ECHO staff member, who will usually respond within a day or two. The group

posts free documents on its website, which averages 180 downloads a day. Also, any organization or individual working to help the exceptionally poor in a developing country can register with ECHO and request trial packets of seeds from its extensive tropical seed bank. If the crop does well, they can save their seed and are expected to report back on the plant's performance.

The most impressive place on ECHO's 50-acre campus is the Global Farm. On 10 acres of what was originally beach sand, ECHO's staff have mimicked six thriving tropical ecosystems, each demonstrating a host of sustainable agriculture practices appropriate to that region. I was unprepared for just how Edenic, how ecologically exuberant this place would be. Browsing my way through these ecosystems, where nearly every one of the 580 varieties of vegetables, trees, and shrubs is edible, I experienced a feeling of limitless bounty. Over the course of my three-day visit, I ate my way across 12 acres and six ecosystems; each zone was a new restaurant.

For the poor in tropical regions there comes a time each year toward the end of the dry season when food is scarce, when eating next year's seed becomes a tempting thought—the hunger season. During this difficult time, hardy plants such as chaya and moringa quickly take on a special significance. Depending on when the rains come, the hunger season is measured in weeks or months. Sometimes, during drought or war or times of political corruption, the hunger season is measured in years. Or lifetimes.

BEFORE COMING TO ECHO I had the

Above, a garden using concrete blocks, tires, and other containers mimics rooftop conditions.

vague and mistaken notion that world hunger was simply about a lack of food. After all, wasn't that the aim of the Green Revolution, to increase yields so that there would be more food all around?

In his groundbreaking 1981 book *Poverty and Famines*, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen demonstrated that starvation resulted not from a lack of food but from its unfair distribution. "Starvation is the characteristic of some people not having enough food to eat," he wrote, "not the characteristic of there being not enough food to eat." Given that assessment, I wondered, why does ECHO focus on teaching small-scale farming skills that boost production? Why not focus their efforts on changing bad policies?

"I didn't want to become God's 'angry young man,'" said Dr. Martin Price, ECHO's co-founder. Price is a small, unassuming man in his 60s whose quiet demeanor seems more fitted to the staid life of the biochem lab than to directing a thriving nonprofit organization. Since turning over the reins to ECHO's current CEO, Stan Doerr, five years ago, Price now volunteers at ECHO refining the rooftop gardening techniques he has worked on for almost half his adult life.

Early on Price decided that he wanted to come out with solutions. He agreed with Sen's assessment that anybody with money can get food. "You can have an oil kingdom in the desert where nothing grows and you can purchase all the food you want," Price said, "but if you're poor, you need either a source of income or you need to grow that food yourself."

The only time it doesn't make sense to focus on food production is in totally imploded societies—refugee situations, for instance, or civil war, in which people have no control over their lives. But for the most part the politics of a country aren't connecting with impoverished farmers. "You can talk about corrupt governance in Zimbabwe," said Doerr, an avuncular, bearded man in his 50s, "but if people can maximize productivity on their piece of land, they will have more say in their future." By helping the small farmer, Doerr and Price and others at ECHO believe, you increase food security for the whole country.

"The big picture in fighting hunger," Price said, "is that somebody needs to come along and tackle the really tough problem of making

marginal land more productive in a sustainable way. It's not as glamorous as, say, treating 200 kids for worms or starting a micro-lending program. But it's the bottom-line solution to poverty."

To that end ECHO focuses on under-exploited food plants. Of all the food eaten in the world, 95 percent of it comes from only 30 species. "And yet God has created many, many kinds of food plants," Price said. Maybe corn isn't the best thing for your region; maybe



Above, ECHO intern Andrew Kroeze demonstrates first steps in creating a tire garden. At right, ECHO co-founder Martin Price.



the grain amaranth is better. Or for someone in a semi-arid part of Brazil, the egusi melon, whose seed contains 50 percent oil and 35 percent protein, might be a better choice.

Price is careful to point out that ECHO isn't promoting an ideology or program. I was surprised to learn that, though ECHO practices what I would consider "organic" agriculture, they still occasionally use fertilizers and pesticides, albeit in limited amounts. They simply want to present options, believing that the farmers themselves should be given all the available knowledge and then consider what works best for them. There's a big difference between a bottlecap of fertilizer in the bottom of a hole you've dug for your corn, Price reminded me, and spraying a whole field with it.

ECHO IS A repository of innovative ideas which, for the most part, Doerr and his co-workers have learned from small farmers, development workers, and other agricultural researchers. Many of the techniques produce high yields, but not due to increased

fertilizer or hybrid seeds as was the case with the Green Revolution. They are the result of discovering how nature creates abundance and mimicking it.

Such horticultural plentitude doesn't just happen, of course. It takes patience and skill. And the human temptation since Adam has been to reach beyond our limits.

It was through an effort to bypass nature and create abundance from scratch that the first Green Revolution began. Coined in a 1968 speech by USAID administrator William Gaud, the phrase "Green Revolution" came to signify a major shift toward industrial agriculture that began in the Yaqui Valley in Mexico during WWII and culminated in India and other parts of Asia in the '60s and '70s. Funded by the Rockefeller and Ford foundations, the Green Revolution was perhaps the largest project aimed at ending global hunger the world has ever seen; it was also humanity's biggest attempt thus far to create the illusion of abundance through chemistry.

To create this biological slight-of-hand, the Green Revolution's magicians, notably plant breeder Norman Borlaug, developed hybrid varieties of wheat and rice. These super-plants produced abundantly, but sucked massive amounts of nutrients from the soil and required equally massive amounts of irrigation, fertilizers, and pesticides. As its promoters and detractors alike acknowledge, the Green Revolution did boost short-term yields and feed millions of people. But every revolution must eventually take stock of its successes and failures, and the bills on the Green Revolution's account are now coming due. The world is in the red: dead zones in our oceans, poisoned groundwater, salinized soils.

Punjab, the breadbasket of India and former crown jewel of the Green Revolution, is now a wasteland. It's true that Borlaug's "miracle seeds," under the right circumstances, could provide "an abundance that was almost certain," Raj Patel wrote in *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*. "The problem lay in the fact that the circumstances were almost never right." The new seeds required excessive irrigation, which caused water tables to drop more than a foot a year; such irrigation also caused salts

Continued on Page 46

GROWING TOGETHER

**Koinonia Farm has seen a renewal of community life—
and a new, sustainable approach to the land.**



OUTSIDE THE COMMUNITY dining hall at Koinonia Farm near Americus, Georgia, a bell sits on a rough-hewn post like a hat on a welcoming host. For almost 70 years, visitors have been welcomed there every weekday for a community meal. Today, there's a new vitality at Koinonia; it can be heard in

the bell's ring five times a day, as well as in the voices of cattle and sheep, children and construction crews. While deeply rooted in their tradition, Koinonia's members are creating fresh structures in community life—and they have a new approach to the land based on permaculture, a design system for sustainable habitats.

In 1942, Clarence and Florence Jordan, along with Martin and Mabel England, started the farm as a “demonstration plot for the kingdom of God.” Koinonia endured violent hostility for its pacifist stand in the 1940s and for fostering close relationships between African-American and white neighbors in the 1950s and '60s. In the '70s and '80s, members' work led to forming international ministries: Habitat for Humanity, Jubilee Partners, and the Fuller Center for Housing.

But in the wake of a 1993 decision to make structural changes to function more like a typical nonprofit

corporation, Koinonia experienced a decade of challenges. The change had sound reasons, including the hope to include more African-American neighbors in long-term employment, but the community struggled for leadership and focus. The core ministries were sustained, but Koinonia lost money and had to sell nearly half of its 1,100 acres.

In 2004 a small group of Koinonians began the journey to return to their origins as a Christian intentional community. Their movement toward renewal was kindled the previous year when they hired Bren Dubay as the organization's new director. She still sees it as proof of God's sense of humor: How did an Irish Catholic from Texas come to lead a community founded by Southern Baptists in Georgia into its new era? It was also good sense: Dubay brought skills in fundraising and administration, as well those of an artist and spiritual director. When she came, Dubay insisted on two things: “We're going to pray together, and do the math.” Particularly in light of Koinonia's financial losses in the 1990s, she has led in establishing a transparent and accountable annual budget.

She also quadrupled the times of daily prayer. “We have a ‘senior partner’ here,” Dubay likes to remind folks. Patterns of prayer keep the members in touch



Amanda Moore photos

Members of Koinonia Community, left. Above, members link hands as a symbol of their commitment to each other.



In the 1950s and '60s,
Koinonia endured violent
hostility for fostering close
relationships between
African-American and
white neighbors.



“There’s something about this land, this air, this water—you feel like you’re on holy ground.”

with God and with each other. On weekdays, the first bright clang of the bell at 7:30 a.m. announces a half hour of silent prayer, followed by morning devotions in the red-roofed chapel. The bell now also rings at 10 a.m., 3 p.m., and 8 p.m., each time inviting those listening to remember God and their common intentions.

NOT LONG AFTER the late afternoon prayer bell, there’s a frequent sight on the farm: Brendan Prendergast, in hat and suspenders, holding a coil of electric wire, calling, “Come on cows!” A herd of cattle—brown, red, and white; full-grown and calves—trot and shuffle past him to their next grazing site.

Koinonia’s new farm design, which emphasizes livestock integrated with growing vegetables and its historic pecan and fruit orchards, came about through prayerful listening. Within a year or so after Prendergast, his wife Sarah, and their daughter Ida came to Koinonia in 2006 (another daughter, Kellan, came along in 2007), the community heard his passion for the land and commissioned him to manage the farm. Over the next year, Prendergast observed and reflected on Koinonia’s farm: Its 575 acres had a single-product focus of pecans, but there were also blueberry bushes and muscadine vines, woods, creeks, and about 80 acres of fields with depleted soil.

Prendergast expressed interest in using permaculture, a system that is able to incorporate many sustainable agriculture methods; its principles and ethics are highly adaptable, focusing on the possibilities of whatever ecosystem resources are at hand—people, time, and money as well as soil, water, and climate.

Already, with the help of many hands

and minds, key permaculture principles can be seen at Koinonia. For example, every element—including animals, plants, and even building structures—has several functions, and each function is linked to other elements. In the vegetable garden, veggies intermingle with small trees, shrubs, and vines. Climbing plants provide flowers and fruit that attract bees (from the farm’s hives), while saving space. Shrubs and small trees provide a structure for vines as well as giving shade from sun and shelter from wind; their roots loosen compacted soil. Vegetable varieties are interspersed with each other, mimicking nature, which helps repel damaging insects and attract beneficial ones.

Inspired by the work of farmer/philosopher Joel Salatin in Virginia, the new farm design focuses on holistic methods of animal husbandry with the goal of producing organic, pasture-raised meat, dairy, and eggs. Cattle, sheep, and chickens are grazed in carefully managed succession to complement one another’s needs and functions. Cows eat certain grasses, sheep prefer others; the chickens consume insects that plague the cattle. This cycle promotes healthy animals and gives the plants time to grow or reseed themselves. The animals help break up the soil, which is also fertilized by their manure—which is why they’re sometimes seen grazing the orchards or the garden.

Prendergast has begun to establish a herd of Pineywoods cattle, a breed well-adapted to the Southeast but now relatively rare. The hope is to create a stable ecosystem for other endangered species that were once native to this area. With newcomers born on the farm nearly each month, the farm currently has more than three dozen cattle, four dozen sheep, about 10 pigs, and dozens of other animals—chickens, ducks, turkeys, rabbits, and goats.

ANOTHER PERMACULTURE principle is to meet challenges with small and slow solutions. Pecan production provides more than half of Koinonia’s income, so changing this focus overnight isn’t viable. Currently Koinonia is experimenting with techniques that will reduce the use of chemicals in the pecan orchard.

Permaculture, named and popularized in the 1970s in Tasmania, Australia, by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, has long

Above, Koinonia members share a blessing over a newly fenced 80-acre pasture. At right, various produce and a growing frame, part of the community’s new approach to sustainable agriculture.

been credited with successful farming methods in developing countries—from rice-duck farming in Vietnam to a recently established permaculture center in Marda, Palestine. Permaculture is “information and imagination-intensive, not energy- or capital-intensive,” writes Mollison.

Koinonians easily resonated with the permaculture approach. It’s “kind of going back to the way we used to do things—fewer chemicals, more natural methods,” Norris Harris, Koinonia’s chaplain, who also helps manage the pecan orchard, told *Sojourners*.

At the same time, permaculture requires “an experimenter’s mind—even if you try hundreds of things that fail, there’s always a possibility,” says consultant Wayne Weisman, who this October will lead a permaculture design course at Koinonia (the fourth to be hosted there).

Experimentation, too, is in keeping with Koinonia’s ethos: As Lenny Jordan, son of Clarence and Florence, notes, “Clarence emphasized that Koinonia was an experiment in Christian living. An experiment adapts to new conditions, so it’s not surprising that Koinonia has a new form. There’s a fresh vitality here.”

To share ideas and resources, Koinonia is partnering with other farmers, a concept modeled by Clarence Jordan. The farm has established partnerships for raising sheep and processing blueberries. Members have helped lead seminars about sustainable farming and Christian community at nearby Fort Valley University and at Emory University in Atlanta.

BUT PERMACULTURE is only part of Koinonia’s renewal. What Koinonia is doing these days, members emphasize, starts with who the community is, expressed in its mission statement: “Christians called to live together in intentional community, sharing a life of prayer, work, study, service, and fellowship.”

After a year of listening and discerning that began in 2004, a small group of Koinonians committed themselves to return to the community-based vision of Clarence Jordan. Together, they’ve developed a new model of membership that consists of



In permaculture, every element—including animals, plants, and even building structures—has several functions.

“stewards,” the core members who commit long-term to the community’s covenant; “apprentices” and “novices,” those on a path toward being stewards; “service partners,” non-communal members who participate as much as they can in the common life; and “community interns,” those who come to participate in community life for three months to a year.

Currently, there are six stewards, several apprentice/novices, and nine partners. Among them are both recent arrivals and long-term Koinonians such as Norris Harris and Kathleen Monts; 20somethings and seniors; and, happily, many children and youth.

The internship program provides a guided experience of Koinonia’s life. Amanda Moore, the intern “shepherd,” sums up the purpose as “know God, know thyself.” Many interns are “seekers”—looking for fresh meaning in their own lives, healing wounds related to the church, or a new vocational direction. Others come just wanting to enjoy life on the farm for a while. Most are profoundly changed by their time at Koinonia, some sharing intimately

of themselves for the first time.

“Each week, the interns and I practice ‘examen’—sharing consolations and desolations of our week. It’s a beautiful spiritual exercise that helps open the eyes and ears of the heart,” Moore told *Sojourners*. “Being willing to sit with another person in their pain is something we Americans seem to fear. This type of intimacy requires a lot of our ‘self’; it requires that we not hold another person at arm’s length, but walk side by side through life.”

Since 2005, more than 60 interns have participated, and at any time they can be found working at farm chores or in the office or with another of Koinonia’s ministries, such as the Koinonia Community Outreach Center that offers health, education, and counseling services to people in the Americas area.

“There’s something about this land, this air, this water—you feel like you’re on holy ground. There’s something that opens up in people,” says Dubai.

Hospitality—welcoming God in the form of a stranger—continues to be central to the life and ministry of Koinonia. In 2010, Koinonia hosted more than 1,000 visitors. A new meeting house (a renovated guest house and dining room) is under construction, with the hope that it will be completed in time for the 70th anniversary in 2012.

This year, Koinonia will hold its sixth “school for conversion,” a weekend seminar exploring intentional community and its intimate connection with the church. Koinonia also continues its tradition of active peacemaking, especially through a connection with Tree of Life, an interfaith group working to be a bridge of reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis.

Jesus sounded the call to a new Way in the first century; Clarence Jordan echoed it in the 1940s, writing, “We seek a new Spirit, a spirit of partnership with God and people everywhere.” Today, people at Koinonia are re-creating that call in the land and in their lives. ■

Melissa Aberle-Grasse writes and teaches English in Atlanta.

The Art of Householding

MY “LIFE PLAN”—at age 23—was to own little and to move where the Spirit led. It was a late 20th century American religious quest interpreted through Dorothy Day’s Catholic anarchy, the factory theology of Simone Weil, Septima Clark’s “practical politics,” and the joyful authority of Clare of Assisi. Full of idealistic forward motion, I was ready to see and save the world—in that order. My move in 1986 from California to inner-city Washington, D.C., was to be temporary.

Instead, I came into possession of a 1901 Victorian row house, and 25 years have passed. (Here’s a koan for you: “Choosing your vocation.”) I was given the gift of stability.

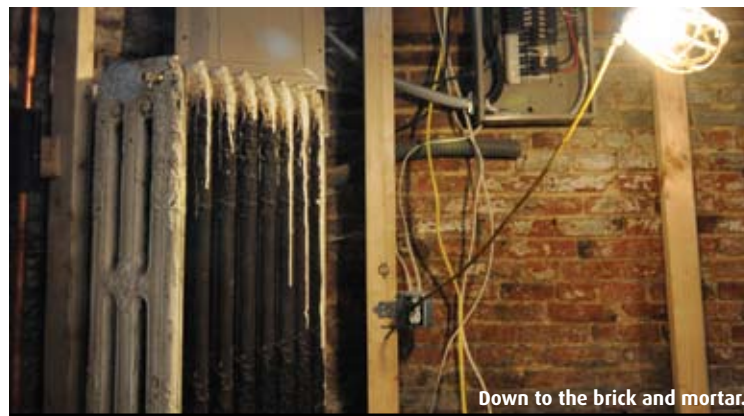
In 2000, after living in two other houses owned by Sojourners community’s housing cooperative,

“Find the place that God has given you and take root there.”

—Thomas Merton

Sojourners associate editor Julie Polter and I purchased our house on Fairmont Street. She was looking for more space (or at least a kitchen larger than a closet) and urban anchorage. I was already living in the house, didn’t want to move, and needed a yard for my dog. I agonized over the ethics of “ownership” until my mom convinced me that “buying property is what the women in our family *do*.” Julie and I scraped together the down payment, added in “urban homesteading” and first-time homeowner tax credits, learned the intricacies of joint tenancy, and shouldered the mortgage.

THE “GIFT OF stability” is considered the fourth vow in Orthodox and Benedictine monastic life. Poverty, chastity, and obedience are the “evangelical vows” that make one



Heather Wilson

radically available to those in need of the gospel. Stability, as Thomas Merton put it, means to “find the place that God has given you and take root there.”

Our house sits on land that was once part of a large estate, according to Julie’s research. The first owners, the Cowells, were a white middle-class couple who worked as a stenographer and editor. In the 1920s, they rented out rooms to Russian Jewish immigrants. The next householders were the Valentines, a middle-class African-American couple. She worked as a real estate agent and community activist for black empowerment and desegregation; he was a messenger for the National Geographic Society.

In the early 1970s, a real estate company bought the house and it fell into disrepair. Sojourners community purchased it soon after moving from Chicago to D.C. in the mid-’70s. Since then our house has sheltered homeless mothers, labor organizers, Chicano activists, a tie-dye business, jazz musicians, poets and memoirists, an extended family, band members of The Fugitives, magazine editors, hunger fasters, dissident farmers, a Kenyan office worker, and a Tanzanian bank teller, plus a few dogs and an occasional bird.

This summer we are

midway through what is possibly the first substantive rehab the house has had in 50 years. Working with a construction company dedicated to providing affordable housing, we’ve opened walls that reveal pipes that supplied the original gas lamps, cured oak roof timbers (cracked), and a pristine solid oak pocket door, giving a glimpse of the house’s original glory.

HOUSEHOLDING IS AN art with deep biblical resonance. “The central [biblical] problem is not emancipation but *rootage*,” writes Walter Brueggemann in *The Land*, “not meaning but *belonging*, not separation from community, but *location* within it, not isolation from others but *placement* deliberately between the generations of promise and fulfillment.” My 23-year-old self’s quest for enlightenment was subverted by staying in place.

Householding is an art that plays out over time as well. It changes as affections deepen. “Love your neighbors,” challenges Wendell Berry. “Not the neighbors you pick out, but the ones you have.” It’s something I’m still learning. ■

Rose Marie Berger, author of the book *Who Killed Donte Manning?* (available at store. sojo.net), is a Catholic peace activist and a Sojourners associate editor.



CHRIST AT THE CHECKPOINT

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICT

www.christatthecheckpoint.com

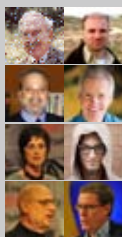


Bethlehem Bible College invites you to be part of a unique conference that will bring together influential leaders and conscientious Christ-followers for a week of dialogue and discussion on issues of Biblical justice and reconciliation as it contextually relates to one of the most vexing conflicts in modern history.

The aim of Christ at the Checkpoint is to provide an opportunity for Christians who take the Bible seriously to prayerfully seek a proper awareness of issues of peace, justice, and reconciliation.

The conference will host a wide range of world-class international speakers, as well as well-equipped local Palestinian and Messianic Jewish leaders, who will share from their own experiences and offer a variety of diverse perspectives. Confirmed speakers include:

Alex Awad	Ken Sande
Ben White	Labib Madanat
Bishara Awad	Lynne Hybels
Bob Roberts	Manfred Kohl
Chris Seiple	Munther Isaac
Daniel Bourdanne	Paul Alexander
Evan Thomas	Richard Harvey
Gary Burge	Ron Sider
Hanna Katanacho	Salim Munayer
Imad Shehade	Sami Awad
Jack Sara	Shane Claiborne
Joel Hunter	Stephen Sizer
John Ortberg	Tony Campolo
Jonathan Kuttub	



"This conference will be the largest gathering of Evangelical Christians on the topic of peace and reconciliation in the Middle East. Come and take part in this historical event!"

~ Dr. Bishara Awad \ President, Bethlehem Bible College



MARCH 5-9, 2012

BETHLEHEM-PALESTINE

"Whenever I travel abroad I arrive with one question: How is the Body of Christ faring in this place? In 2012 an unprecedented international gathering of Christians will convene in Bethlehem to witness the life of the Palestinian church. We will study together, worship together, make new cross-cultural friends and examine what may be done to support this ancient church."

~Dr. Gary Burge, Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College



Join us from March 5-9, 2012 in Bethlehem, Palestine as we explore hope in the midst of conflict—a hope that is manifest in the peace and reconciliation ministry of the Palestinian church.

CONFERENCE PACKAGES

- Participants from the United States can view tour package options via our Stateside partner, **Harmony International**. Harmony International 2090 Baker Road, Suite 304-104 Kennesaw, Georgia 30144
www.harmonyinternational.com
brad@harmonyinternational.com
1.888.935.5551 Contact Person: Brad Matheson
- Participants from the United Kingdom can view tour package options via our British partner, **Worldwide Christian Travel**. Worldwide Christian Travel
36 Coldharbour Road Bristol, England, BS6 7NA
www.christian-travel.com
hopebethlehem@btinternet.com
01934.733695 Contact Person: John Angle
- Participants from Canada can view tour package options via our Canadian partner, **HOPE Outreach**. HOPE Outreach of Canada
PO Box 20033 Woodstock, Ontario N4S 8X8, Canada
www.hopeoutreach.ca
office@hopeoutreach.ca
519.537.3511 Contact Person: Wilf Fryday
- Students interested in joining a **Middle East Fellowship** student delegation to attend the conference should contact Peter Ryan. Middle East Fellowship
P.O. Box 1252 Brea, CA 92822
www.middleeastfellowship.org
peter@middleeastfellowship.org
562.653.4252
- For prices and more details on package deals and registration information, please visit the Christ at the Checkpoint website at www.christatthecheckpoint.com. If traveling from a different country, email conference@bethbc.org for more information.

www.christatthecheckpoint.com

Sojourners has been a leading voice for Christian feminism since 1971.

Keep this movement alive for the next generation of women and girls.
Send in your gift to Sojourners today.

Mail your contribution to 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010 or give online at www.sojo.net/donate.



Women activists lead a peace vigil in front of the White House, one of many public witnesses organized by Sojourners over the past 40 years.

BY JEP HOSTETLER

IS LAUGHTER REALLY THE BEST MEDICINE?

How humor can help sustain the work of social justice.

A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

—Proverbs 17:22

HOW CAN ONE have a cheerful heart in this time of global climate change, natural disasters, and violence on every hand in nearly every land? How can we speak of humor, levity, jesting, and laughter when our world is in such pain?

Having a cheerful heart, as the author of Proverbs put it, does not mean that we avoid engagement in serious peacemaking work. What it means is that humor can provide interludes in many of the deepest reaches of seemingly desperate situations.

There is a time and place for humor. As it says in Ecclesiastes, “There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.” Humor—like art, music, and dance—is essential for the well-being of the human spirit.

Healthy humor is inviting and forgiving, never hurtful, and often involves some kind of pleasant, incongruent surprise. For example, I recently heard a 4-year-old (whose parents live in Ohio and grandparents in Iowa) ask his mother if he was a





Buckeye or a Hawkeye. His mother wisely replied, "Ivan, you can be anything you want to be," to which the boy replied, "Good, then I want to be Chinese!" We have all heard comedy routines, at stand-up clubs or on TV sitcoms, that are sarcastic, acerbic, and hurtful to one population or another. This is not healthy humor.

It is well documented that stress has negative effects on our immune systems

People with a healthy sense of humor are often much more comfortable with change.

and our general health. While there have been few studies on the positive effects of healthy humor, and the scientific evidence is still unfolding, available information strongly suggests that humor, with its inherent laughter, has many benefits:

■ **The "laugher's high."** Laughter can increase positive elements of the immune system and decrease stress hormone levels. Dr. Lee Berk, who with Dr. Stanley Tan pioneered research into the benefits of laughter, recently told Ira Flatow on NPR that the research is becoming clearer: Laughter does suppress stress hormones, especially cortisol. It also can increase natural opioids in our systems. These natural opioids are called endorphins. They are the same chemicals that give us the "runner's high." The amount of endorphins produced varies from individual to individual. Additionally, hearty laughter exercises the abdominal musculature, lowers blood pressure, and relaxes the body.



A social worker walks into a bar...

TWO SOCIAL WORKERS were walking through a rough part of the city in the evening. They heard moans and muted cries for help from a back lane. Upon investigation, they found a semi-conscious man in a pool of blood. "Help me, I've been mugged and viciously beaten," he pleaded. The two social workers turned and walked away. One remarked to her colleague, "You know, the person that did this really needs help."

A MAN WENT to a social worker and told him he wanted help because he thought he was a dog. When the social worker asked him how long he had been thinking he was a dog, he replied, "Ever since I was a puppy." The social worker said, "Okay, lie down on the couch." The man said, "I'm not allowed on the couch."

■ **To keep from crying.** By acting as a coping mechanism, laughter allows one to relax, if even for a short period. In this sense, laughter and crying are emotional cousins. We often hear the expression, "If I weren't laughing, I'd be crying." Humor provides that healthy "time out," so one can go back to work on the matters at hand. In this sense, humor becomes a stress reliever.

■ **Drop kick me, Jesus.** Recently several of my friends went to hear an internationally known peace advocate, writer, and activist. To their delight and surprise, he opened his session by gently inviting everyone to stand and join him in singing the country music song "Drop Kick Me Jesus (Through the Goalposts of Life)." By the end of the exercise, the crowd was standing, swaying, singing, and smiling. This is not what they expected to hear from this scholarly mediation expert, but it certainly opened the lines of communication for the evening. Lighthearted humor puts people at ease. Similarly, when physicians use humor with patients it often puts both parties at ease in a way that formal communication cannot. When I do presentations on nonviolent lifestyle to high school seniors, I always start my sessions with humor and magic. In the evaluations afterward, participants nearly always comment on how the sessions were fun, as well as educational and thought-provoking. Humor, in this situation, truly helps to open up the lines of communication.

■ **So funny I nearly laughed.** There are two sides to the laughter coin. On one side is the ability (or lack thereof) to tell jokes or stories, or otherwise invite folks into the laughter. On the other side is the ability (or lack thereof) to laugh or participate in the laughter. We each have our own understanding of humor, and we each have our spectrum of willingness to participate in humor events.

Our ability to enjoy humor is based on at least two primary factors: our formative years and our genetic makeup. We are influenced by family dynamics. Family and household dynamics can range from a sullen or even abusive environment, where humor is largely absent, to a convivial family setting in which jokes, stories, harmless pranks, and laughter

are commonplace. In addition to this nurture side of our humor understanding, each of us has a specific genetic makeup. One researcher suggests that we have a genetic predisposition either to being light-hearted and resilient or to being more sedate and less flexible. Some people are simply more spontaneous and upbeat than others. This is not cast in stone, but it does suggest that some

Peace workers often become so involved with the pain in our world that humor gets lost.

people are more inclined toward laughter, both from permission granted during childhood and from a genetic predisposition.

It is possible to change the way one responds to humor. I had one rather dour-looking gentleman tell me after an evening presentation, "That was so funny, I nearly laughed out loud." He was serious, and I acknowledged his progress from hardly ever smiling to nearly laughing. We all have our own understanding of what humor means.

WHEN IT COMES to humor, we have some good role models. Writer Jim Forest tells the story of the time in 1962, in the midst of the Cold War, when Thomas Merton was forbidden by his religious superiors to publish anything about war and peace. "Like so many of his Russian literary counterparts of that era," Forest wrote, "Merton managed to do an end-run around his censors," and kept writing—using pseudonyms such as Benedict Monk and Marco J. Frisbee. "[I]n case you had any doubts," Forest wrote, "Thomas Merton had a wild sense of humor."

Another peace-minded guru, the Dalai Lama, has a quick wit and a generous dose of healthy humor. For instance, he told an interviewer in the 1990s why he has more than one robe: "I have to have two," he said. "Even the Dalai Lama does laundry." The interviewer noted his exercise machine, and commented that he seemed to be in pretty good shape. "I think I might be pregnant," the Dalai Lama responded, rubbing his round belly. He continued, "I pray for Tibet every day. But, also, I pray for China. I'm optimistic." Then, the interviewer wrote, a mischievous grin appeared: "Of course, I've been optimistic for 37 years now!"

In my international travels, I have observed that peace workers often become so involved with the pain in our world that humor gets lost. People who are active in peacemaking and in justice work need a sense of humor. People with a healthy sense of humor are often much more comfortable with change, unusual circumstances, and alteration of plans, attributes that are

especially important when tackling some of the most difficult tasks, such as walking in solidarity with the oppressed, speaking the truth to power, and standing between angry enemies.

Phil Hart is a friend of mine and a Christian Peacemaker Team delegate to Colombia. He recently told me a story regarding a breakdown in their motorcycle travels in Colombia. One of the group members went for help, while those left behind tried to find some shade in the sweltering heat. While waiting for the repairs, the conversation turned to each man's nickname. One Colombian had the nickname of Condorcita (little condor), because when he was a little boy his uncle saw him running around with his arms spread out, imitating an airplane. As the men told elaborate stories of how their nicknames came about, boisterous laughter broke out. That evening around a meager meal, the stories were retold, and again the entire group was caught up in laughter. All this on the eve of a critical meeting with state officials to seek the return of stolen farmland. Humor helped to release some of the tension as they faced the serious task before them.

We need to take our work seriously, but ourselves lightly, especially when times are difficult. Nurturing our sense of humor is not only good for our health; it also helps us to continue our mission with greater joy—and a cheerful heart. ■

Jep Hostettler, associate professor emeritus at The Ohio State University, School of Public Health, is a public speaker and the author, most recently, of The Joy Factor (Herald Press).

Just for the fun of it...

MARK TWAIN ONCE said that humor is tragedy plus time. When a man is falling down the stairs, it's not funny. But when he gets up, brushes himself off and declares "I meant to do that," then you laugh. Mark Twain also said "sanity and happiness are an impossible combination," a reminder that mirth is one of life's most under-appreciated gifts. Another way to put it: You can never get enough jokes.

■ A man walks into a doctor's office with a cucumber up his nose, a carrot in his left ear, and a banana in his right ear. "What's the matter with me, doc?" Doctor: "You're not eating properly."

■ A little girl became restless as the preacher's sermon dragged on and on. Finally, she leaned over to her mother and whispered, "Mommy, if we give him the money now, will he let us go?"

■ A guy failed his driver's test because when the examiner asked, "What do you do at a red light?" he said, "I don't know ... look around, listen to the radio ..."

■ The CEO of a large HMO dies and goes to heaven. St. Peter shows him to a lovely villa with wonderful music, great views, a full staff of servants, and gourmet meals. The HMO executive says, "This is terrific!" "But don't get too comfortable," St. Peter replies, "you're only approved for a three-day stay."

■ A guy shows up late for work. The boss yells "You should have been here at 8:30!" The man replies, "Why? What happened at 8:30?"

And a final thought from Mark Twain: "Of all the things I've lost, I miss my mind the most." ■



By Brittany Shoot

ARE YOU PAYING **ATTENTION?**

How do we find ourselves and God in the midst of media overload?

.....
ADVERTISING AND SOCIAL media often imply that we are each the center of the universe. In her most recent documentary, award-winning Norwegian filmmaker Tonje Hessen Schei reminds us that going outdoors is the simplest way to gain perspective on what tiny pieces of the universal puzzle we really are.

Getty Images

In *Play Again* (Ground Productions), Hessen Schei pulls six teenagers away from their gaming consoles and smart phones to document a weeklong wilderness adventure. Many of the skeptical teens spend five to 15 hours in front of a screen each day and have never spent extended time in nature before. One girl, Paige, has a hard time leaving her computer because, she says, "MySpace is like my other family." But freed from online gaming and Internet-based relationships, some of the youth delight in their newfound freedom outdoors. They learn to build fires, construct bows and arrows, and make up campfire songs. A few enjoy their connectivity reprieve so much that upon returning to their everyday lives, they engage in voluntary media fasts, spending more than a week away from TV, video games,

40 The Roswell Legacy
 Danny Duncan Collum on
 UFOs and the Cold War.

42 A Gospel Takeover
 Tim King reviews *OneLife*.

44 Holy Competition
 An interview with the director
 of *Koran By Heart*



concerns. She asks whether we can engage in enhanced self-awareness, perception, consciousness, and original thinking when we're so constantly wired to—and yet disconnected from—one another. To answer her own questions, she interviews teens who feel phantom cell phone vibrations during class, despite leaving their smart phones in their lockers. The same young people lament

How is so much knowledge at our fingertips affecting our relationships and shaping our world?

that they compete for their parents' attention alongside machines and devices, with the adults in their lives absorbed in texting and email, even during traditionally family-centric times such as dinner. Turkle profiles elderly men and women who are desperately lonely without human connection and turn to robot pets or their computer monitors rather than seek out human or animal companionship. She looks at adultery online and questions why intimacy is easier without physical bodies.

While she paints an arguably bleak picture of connectivity and closeness, she also forces important philosophical questions: What is intimacy without privacy? If you don't learn how to be alone, won't you always be lonely? Why, as the book title asks, do we expect less from our loved ones? How and to what extent is technology altering our interpersonal bonds?

In a way, Turkle also poses another question in *Alone Together*: Is technology exacerbating our weaknesses? Are the tradeoffs truly worth it? Many people might agree that reconnecting with a long-lost friend on Facebook is a benefit of our ability to network across time and place. Fewer might consider the insidiousness of revisiting high school-era jealousy when the popular kids won't "friend" you as an adult. Spiritual communities flourish online, but so do hate groups. Infidelity can be facilitated by the secrecy of online lives, though in fairness,

Continued on Page 41

and the Internet. Aleks compares nature to a first-person shooter video game, noting without irony, "When you're outside, it's so much more realistic."

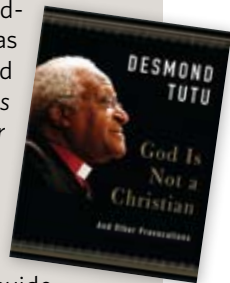
The teens in *Play Again* are more than a cautionary tale about losing touch with the natural world. Their stories also represent a growing interest in combating media overload. While many of us regularly battle communication and information avalanches—flooded inboxes, compulsory social media status updates, an unceasing 24-hour news cycle—fewer may consider how so much knowledge and connectivity at our literal fingertips is affecting our relationships and shaping our world.

In her newest book, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (Basic Books), sociologist and renowned MIT professor of technology and culture Sherry Turkle addresses similar

New & Noteworthy

LOVE PROVOKES

From challenging apartheid in South Africa to speaking out for the rights and dignity of all world-wide, Desmond Tutu has fearlessly proclaimed love and justice. *God Is Not a Christian and Other Provocations* collects his most prophetic speeches and writings in one volume, with introductions that provide historical context. HarperOne

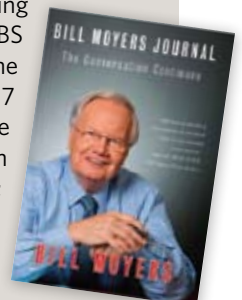


RISKING CHANGE

In *Renovation of the Church: What Happens When a Seeker Church Discovers Spiritual Formation*, pastors Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken share honestly the ups and downs of redirecting their congregation from a focus on attendance numbers and religious consumerism to spiritual and community transformation. Foreword by Dallas Willard. IVP Books

QUALITY CONVERSATIONS

The book *Bill Moyers Journal: The Conversation Continues* compiles thoughtful, wide-ranging interviews from the PBS show of the same name that aired from 2007 to April 2010. Explore ideas that matter, from poetry to politics; includes new commentary by Moyers. The New Press



THE CREATIVE SOUL

The Artist's Rule: Nurturing Your Creative Soul with Monastic Wisdom is a book for anyone longing to "integrate his or her spiritual path and creative longings." Author Christine Valters Paintner is a Benedictine oblate, artist, spiritual director, and founder of the online Abbey of the Arts (www.Abbeyofthearts.com). Sorin Books

The Roswell Legacy

IN THE 1990s TV series *The X Files*, FBI agent Fox Mulder was on a quest to discover the facts about UFO sightings and alien abductions. “The truth,” he insisted, “is out there.” And in the series, that truth involved a labyrinthine conspiracy between some powerful earthlings and extraterrestrial invaders that went all the way back to the UFO crash at Roswell, New Mexico, in July 1947.

Something definitely crashed at Roswell in 1947. Local people saw the wreckage and saw government men swoop in to remove it. Then the whole affair disappeared behind an impenetrable wall of secrecy. Now a recently published book, *Area 51*, by an established mainstream journalist, Annie Jacobsen, has reopened the case. The book’s title refers to an ultra-secret U.S. military installation in the Nevada desert to which, according to UFO lore, the craft and alien bodies recovered at Roswell were removed. And Jacobsen’s book suggests that the truth is further out there than even Fox Mulder ever imagined.

It’s always been difficult to separate myth from reality regarding the strange events around the Roswell



X Files’ Mulder and Scully: The truth is out there.

Twentieth Century Fox photo

life on the planet. Nuclear radiation—the silent, odorless, colorless, and tasteless poison that the atomic bombings of Japan had unleashed—had entered the ecosystem through atmospheric nuclear weapons tests. And, according to the leading politicians of the day, the enemy—The Communist—was within, hiding among us, perhaps disguised as a benign left-leaning Democrat, or even a do-gooder clergyman.

It was a nightmare. And the movies, the collective dream life of our culture, showed it.

Mixed in with the nightmare of the Cold War, and its cinematic manifestations, were widespread real-life sightings of UFOs that began in 1947. If you don’t want to believe that these were really extraterrestrial vehicles, then it makes sense to guess that these early UFO sightings resulted from a combination of Cold War high-tech weapons research (perhaps on both sides) and the Cold War-induced paranoia of the time. Most of Jacobsen’s book includes painstaking research on secret Cold War technology.

But *Area 51* suggests that there really was something strange going on in the skies in 1947 and that it bore a direct relationship to the Cold War. Annie Jacobsen’s anonymous source on this

topic, upon whom she is betting her professional life, claims that the Roswell vehicle was an experimental Soviet craft, made with technology captured from the Nazis, and those hairless pilots with big heads and strange eyes were really 13-year-old humans genetically and surgically altered by the Nazi scientist Josef Mengele. And, the source claims, the Soviet project was inspired by American science fiction, specifically Orson Welles’ radio production of *The War of the Worlds*, which spread panic along the East Coast in 1938.

UFO buffs have noted that this sounds like the sort of cover story the government would give to mid-level people if they really were working on an alien craft. And the truth will never be known with certainty. Not when the U.S. government barely even acknowledges that Area 51 exists. All we can really know for sure is that, in the late 1940s and early ’50s, a national security state was established in America. And the secrecy and deceit it required have poisoned our national life ever since. ■

How strange sightings, the Cold War, and the national security state add up to a truth we’ll never know.

crash. The UFO sightings of the era blend in history with all the mutant monsters and alien invaders that dominated so many popular movies of the time, from *Godzilla* to *The Day the Earth Stood Still* to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and beyond. There was, of course, a reason for all these fantasy mutations and incursions. America had just entered an undeclared war in which each side threatened to destroy all



Danny Duncan Collum, a Sojourners contributing writer, teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort, Kentucky. His novel *White Boy* was recently published by Apprentice House.

Continued from Page 39

partners seeking an adulterous outlet have never had much trouble finding one. Even Internet addiction remains a disputed subject, despite evidence that many teens and adults are hooked on connectivity. In other words, we're always available but forever distracted. If we can't be alone for even a few minutes, how can we make mindful, respectful time for our relationship with God?

Much as it's easy (and sometimes fun) to do, arguing about the tradeoffs of technology and modernity accomplishes little in the end. There may not be a way to effectively side-step or wholly opt out of communication and media that are quickly becoming the pervasive norm, but there are ways to detox from media overload. Not unlike food fasts and religious retreats from the comforts of everyday life, Dr. Thomas Cooper has led media fasting seminars since his own first abstinence from mass media in 1989. A student of many faiths and religions and a profes-

Do we force those around us to compete with the roar of the Internet?

sor and scholar of ethics, mass media, and culture at Emerson College (and, full disclosure, once my own graduate thesis adviser), Cooper was inspired by friends who happily lived off the grid for years at a time, completely without access to media.

In his new book, *Fast Media, Media Fast: How to Clear Your Mind and Invigorate Your Life In an Age of Media Overload* (AuthorHouse), he pays homage to these friends as he outlines practical degrees of fasting. His varied methods can enable people from all walks of life and belief systems to take a temporary and arguably much-needed break from the strain of modern communication. For example, what Cooper dubs "blackouts" are attempts to remove all media from your life. Another type of fast, a practical fast, includes the option to still check work-related email. He also proposes diets on specific addictive media, such as leaving Facebook for a week if you compulsively check friends' walls, or blocking access to Wikipedia if you're unable to get through a day without fact-checking



Melissa McCarthy in *Bridesmaids*.

LIFE'S PATHOS AND SLAPSTICK

THE AWARD FOR most surprisingly profound film of 2011 might go to *Bridesmaids*. This story of a woman trying to figure out her path in the midst of witnessing her friend's happiness is a deeply funny, smart film, with stylized characters who live in a recognizably real world: unhappy people who are struggling financially; eccentric people who may remind us of college roommates; people living in envy of the economic resources of others. *Bridesmaids* is a comforting, intelligent film about one of the most important lacks in our world: the lack of honest connection.

There are so many well-rounded characters: Maya Rudolph as the bride who conveys the challenge of having two best friends at once; Rose Byrne as a privileged ice queen trying to mask her own vulnerability; and the late, great Jill Clayburgh in an hysterically funny supporting role as Kristin Wiig's mother. And perhaps most of all, Melissa McCarthy, playing a significantly overweight woman who could easily have become a scapegoat for fat jokes but, in one of the film's many subversive charms, turns out to be the character most comfortable in her own skin.

It's not just in the reversal of cultural norms about body image that *Bridesmaids* transcends the traditional limitations of its genre—there are subtle references to the way we have accommodated ourselves to the absurd inconveniences of life in the

post-9/11 era, along with a thoughtful and honest questioning of the place of sex and sexuality in how to get ahead in life, and in love itself.

But most of all, *Bridesmaids* defeats the received wisdom that a contemporary comedy needs to be cynical to be funny or realistic. This film upends that norm by telling a story about ordinary people who sometimes behave well, sometimes poorly, and ultimately start to learn lessons about life that each of us face. *Bridesmaids* ended up reminding me of *Tootsie*, the 1982 comedy drama (one of the best ever made) in which Dustin Hoffman impersonates a woman in order to get a role on a soap opera. That was a film about men written by men; *Bridesmaids* is a film about women, written by women. *Tootsie* was a myth that spoke to the ache each of us has for community and purpose. So does *Bridesmaids*, which manages the very tricky challenge of doing slapstick and pathos at the same time. It knows that life is both funny and sad. We live between the steeple and the gargoyle, and *Bridesmaids* wants to remind us to take responsibility for ourselves and to see beyond surfaces. And, ultimately, to love each other. ■

Gareth Higgins, a Sojourners contributing editor, is executive director of the Wild Goose Festival. Originally from Northern Ireland, he lives in Carrboro, North Carolina.



yourself in conversation by looking up a bit of history or pop culture trivia. As with fasting from food, he also recommends re-entering your wired life slowly. Consuming media in small quantities again as you read just from your time away can ease your re-entry shock.

It's easy to romanticize the notion of unplugging from the grid, but Cooper points to the ways in which it is also a tool for reflective, spiritual mindfulness. In his research, he lived with a number of people who never use or consume media.

We're always available but forever distracted.

He hunkered down with the Old Order Amish. He spent time with the Kogi people in Colombia and the Rapa Nui on Easter Island, people wholly engaged in their communities and with complex belief systems that honor a higher power. In reflecting on the potential of quiet reflectivity, of the possibilities available to those living without modern communication tools, Cooper reminds us that many of the wisest thinkers in history, including Jesus and Moses, "largely derived their inspiration from other than mass communication."

In their own ways, Hessen Schei's thoughtful documentary, Turkle's accessible academic polemic, and Cooper's humble handbook beg the question: Are we living deliberate, examined lives? Or do we force those around us to compete with the roar of the Internet and a near-constant onslaught of information? If you can't make yourself wholly available to yourself or your loved

ones, how can you shut out the world to be fully present in your relationship with God?

Turkle writes about a friend in her 70s "who has meditated on a biblical reading every morning since she was in her teens. She confessed that it is ever more difficult to begin her spiritual exercises before she checks her email; the discipline to defer opening her inbox is now part of her devotional gesture."

Reviewed by Tim King

A GOSPEL TAKEOVER

One.Life: Jesus Calls, We Follow, by Scot McKnight. Zondervan.

MY FIRST YEAR at North Park University, I took Scot McKnight's class, "Jesus of Nazareth." It would have been a whole lot easier if he had just lectured and given tests. But he also challenged us to take Jesus seriously by actually trying to live like him and follow his teachings. This is why McKnight is one of the people I blame for what happened next.

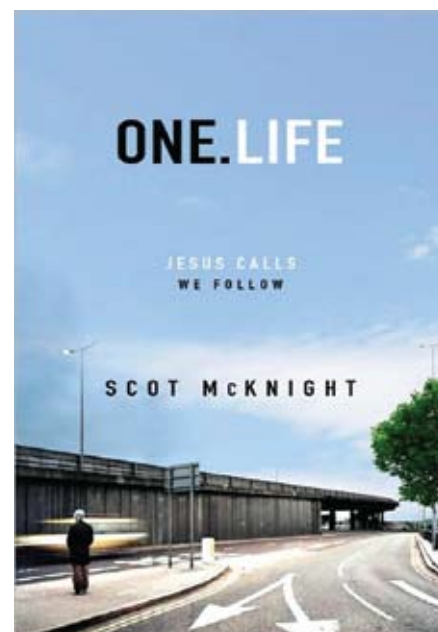
McKnight talked the entire semester about "table fellowship." Who Jesus ate with was significant. It was one of the ways he broke down barriers and modeled for his disciples the kingdom of God. So the next year when Thanksgiving rolled around and plane tickets home were too expensive, I threw a party at my campus apartment. A friend and I got donations from a local food bank and borrowed a school van under false pretenses (McKnight didn't teach me that part). We picked up 15 people who were living on the streets of downtown Chicago, brought them back to my apartment, and celebrated Thanksgiving. We watched football, ate until 1 a.m., and everyone spent the night.

It is with this cautionary tale in mind that I commend to you McKnight's most recent book, *One.Life*. No author is quite as dangerous as the one who can actually convince the reader to take Jesus seriously.

In *One.Life* McKnight tries to answer the very basic question, "What is a Christian?" His own answer used to be, "A Christian is someone who has accepted Jesus; and the Christian life focuses on personal practices of piety." But, he argues, that answer is far too limited and entirely off focus. Jesus didn't want to be "accepted" into anyone's life; rather, "he wanted to take over." So the answer to "What is a Christian?" is

It's worth considering how this dilemma shapes a younger generation of believers and how we can intentionally push back against losing our collective ability to be mindful and still. ■

Brittany Shoot, a writer currently based in Copenhagen, received her master's in visual and media arts from Emerson College.



McKnight is great at blurring that regrettable line often drawn between good scholarship and Christian formation.

far simpler and much harder: A Christian is someone who follows Jesus.

McKnight asserts that if we want to understand what it means to follow Jesus, we have to understand what he has called us to be a part of: the kingdom of God. One of the top Jesus scholars in the country, McKnight's historical and contextual

Thousands of copies in use all over the world!



Heather Wilson

A Conversation of Hope in the Midst of Conflict

Christians and Islam

An important and timely study guide from Sojourners

For centuries, Christians and Muslims have lived in peace as neighbors.

But religious differences are always fertile ground for fanning the fires of conflict for political and economic gain. Both Christians and Muslims have waged "holy wars." There are important theological differences between Christianity and Islam, as well as a faith foundation that we share. This discussion guide will lead users through a study of the important stories of shared history, theological similarities and differences, and aspirations for social justice that both Christians and Muslims share.

This 4-part, downloadable guide includes readings and questions for discussion. Order today at sojo.net/ChristiansandIslam



“

About 400 people have been attending our course sessions using Sojourners' study guide. It's going so strong we had to rent a local movie theater to accommodate the crowd!"

—Barry Rands, Morro Bay, California

insights into the life and teachings of Jesus provide an excellent picture of Jesus' understanding of "the kingdom."

In his chapter on justice, McKnight looks at Jesus' first sermon in Luke 4 and poses the question of why Jesus came to earth. He answers, "Jesus came to bring justice by building the kingdom society on earth, beginning right now with you and with me." In his chapter on peace he digs into what "shalom" meant for Jews of Jesus' day and sums it up poetically, "When you've got what you need and need what you've got, when you love those you are with and are with the ones you love, and when you are doing good to others and they are doing good to you." (And, of course, to those who aren't doing good to you.)

After reading these chapters I started making a mental list of friends and loved ones who try to take the Bible seriously but are probably still more influenced by American politics than by Jesus when it

Jesus didn't want to be "accepted" into anyone's life.

comes to justice and peace. I was feeling pretty smug. But then I read the chapter on church. McKnight asks, "Why is it so easy to work for kingdom purposes but ignore your local church?" When I look back over the past few years, I realize that is often what I have tried to do: jump into the parts of the kingdom that I like and am naturally attracted to, while ignoring some of the harder and messier parts. As McKnight writes, "God's kingdom happens when human beings are empowered by God's Spirit to do God's kingdom work in the shape of a new community."

McKnight is great at blurring that regrettable line often drawn between good scholarship and Christian formation. His lyrical style allows him to switch from historical analysis to devotional meditation in one page. *One Life* is for anyone who takes Jesus seriously enough to go deeper into the gospels—and isn't afraid to let what they find change them. ■

Tim King is communications director at Sojourners.



Rifdha Rasheed
in the documentary
Koran By Heart.

Interview by Becky Garrison

HOLY COMPETITION

Director Greg Barker on the making of *Koran by Heart*.

EVERY YEAR, MORE than 100 children from about 70 countries across the Islamic world converge on Cairo to participate in the world's oldest and most prestigious Quran reciting competition. In the film *Koran By Heart*, Greg Barker follows three 10-year-old children from Senegal, Tajikistan, and the Maldives, whose stories illuminate the tensions between fundamentalist and moderate visions of Islam. He was interviewed by Becky Garrison, author of *Jesus Died for This*.

Becky Garrison: What drew you to the story of the International Holy Quran Competition?

Greg Barker: I'm an American, but I've lived overseas for most of my adult life. As someone who has spent a lot of time in Islamic countries, I was looking for a way of telling a human story that people here in the States could connect with about the eternal struggles in Islam between fundamentalism and modernity. The Quran competition was a very accessible way into a story. I didn't want to make a political tome; I just wanted to tell a good story about ordinary people who are religious, but are going through the same kind of internal struggles and dynamics that anyone goes through regardless of their faith.

What were the particular challenges involved in filming this documentary?

We encountered a fair amount of skepticism from both the organizers and the parents of these children as to why a non-Muslim would want to tell the story about a Quran competition. I think they feel Islam is often misrepresented in the West and they were concerned we would make a film that would somehow be against Islam. I had Muslim-Americans on my team and worked to convince [the organizers and parents] that we just wanted to tell a story that would help change people's attitudes in the States.

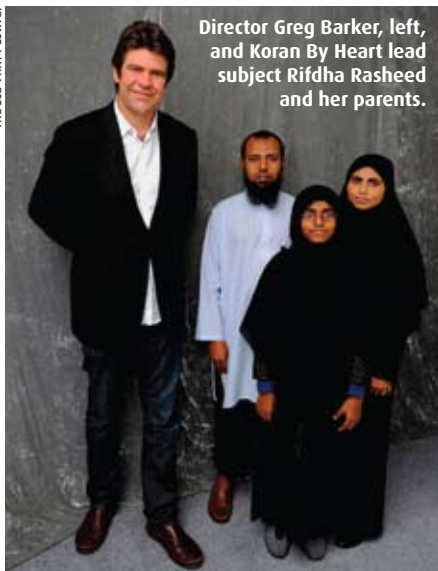
How do you convey to Western audiences the role of Quran recitation in Muslim cultures?

We had to find a very organic way of making it clear what the Quran means to Muslims. The clearest explanation came from a friend in Egypt who said, "For us, the Quran is how a Catholic might view a wine and wafer." It's not just the story of God; it is literally the word of God given to Mohammed from the angel Gabriel. So, the act of recitation is a holy act.

How are girls perceived in these reciting competitions?

There are three top competitions in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Dubai. Of those three, Egypt, which is the historic home of Quran recitation, is the only one that allows girls and women to compete.

How has this film been received so far by



Director Greg Barker, left, and Koran By Heart lead subject Riffha Rasheed and her parents.

the Muslim community?

After the film's premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival, I had a number of Muslims come up to me almost in tears saying they were so pleased with how the film shined a light on their faith in a way they're not used to in this country. My hope is this film will, in its own small way, help us to increase our understanding among the faiths.

Do you see this as a vehicle for sociopolitical change?

I'm drawn to stories that have broader social and political relevance, but I'm not sure that they affect change or not. I think stories are the way we understand the world. So some people may have their eyes opened a bit by the film. Hopefully the next time they encounter a Muslim or a news story about Islam, they might have a different point of view.

Any advice you would give to young filmmakers who want to create films that can make a difference in the world?

I would say just keep your eyes open and listen to other people's stories. If you tell a good story, you'll connect with an audience and make a difference. I want to change the world as much as anybody else. But I realize that people don't want a film that has a chip on its shoulder. They want a film that will engage with them. ■

Koran By Heart will premiere Aug. 1, 2011, on HBO.

EXPERIENCE . . . RIGOROUS ACADEMICS



Apply Now

D.Min., M.Div., MATS, DASD

www.sfts.edu



SAN FRANCISCO
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

© Richard Wheeler

LISTENING TO FAITH)))

What does it mean to be human?

What matters in a life?

How should we love?

What matters in a death?

How can we be of service to each other?

Lansing Lee Conference DECEMBER 4-6, 2011



Keynote

Krista Tippett is the host and producer of "On Being" (formerly "Speaking of Faith"), a weekly public radio conversation about religion, spirituality and large questions of meaning in every aspect of life.



KANUGA

An Episcopal Center • Hendersonville, NC

www.kanuga.org

Include this special discount code when you register to receive 15% off: **SJMAG1**

MARKETPLACE

■ **Earn your degree and change the world.** Oxford Graduate School is a nationally accredited institution offering advanced degrees for Christian scholars in the social professions through short-term residencies and distance learning. Discover more at www.ogs.edu or call 1-800-933-6188.

■ **Experience Hawaii!** 2-3 Month Visiting Associate: apply for ministry with The Church of the Holy Cross UCC, in Hilo, HI. Share your skills working 18 hours per week with housing and travel provided. Ecumenically welcoming. Learn about Hawaii and meet our people. Enjoy the beautiful diversity of life on the Big Island. Send resume or UCC profile to Rev. Tom Olcott, 440 West Lanikaula St., Hilo, HI 96720, or e-mail to revthomasolcott@hotmail.com. Ideal for sabbatical, summer break, retirement experience, semester break. We invite you to plan ahead; this is an on-going opportunity.

■ **Online spiritual apparel.** Grand Opening! All merchandise 5%-35% OFF. More than a clothing line ... we're a movement. www.zazzle.com/vitalvirtues*

■ **San Damiano retreat,** Danville, California, thirty-five miles east of San Francisco. Overnight accommodations available for sponsored, hosted and private retreats, in a peaceful, prayerful setting for rest and renewal. An excellent location for meetings, or conferences. (925) 837-9141, or www.sandamiano.org.

TO PLACE A MARKETPLACE AD
Contact Sojourners at 1-800-714-7474, ext. 676; classifieds@sojo.net;
or Sojourners Advertising, 3333 14th Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Rates (per word): \$2 for 1X; \$1.80 for 3X; \$1.60 for 6X.

A NEW SEAL?

**FAIRWAGES
FAIRPRACTICES
FAIRTRUTH.ORG**
RESOURCES NOW UNCONFERENCE 11/11/11

*Because all who are called,
are called to be healers*

Center for
Non Harming
Ministries
NONHARMING.COM

*"...an extraordinarily powerful
and meaningful book."*
— MARGARET RANDALL, AUTHOR
NICARAGUA
SURVIVING THE LEGACY OF U.S. POLICY
SOBREVIVIENDO EL LEGADO DE LA POLÍTICA DE LOS EE.UU.

A Bilingual Photo/Testimony Book by
PAUL DIX & PAM FITZPATRICK
www.NicaraguaPhotoTestimony.org

SOJOURNERS INTERNS

Sojourners hosts an annual internship program of voluntary service for education, ministry, and discipleship. For more information about the 2012-13 year, visit www.sojo.net. Applications are due March 1, 2012.



Heather Wilson

Ending the Hunger Season

Continued from Page 27

to build up in the soils, turning them lifeless; the turn toward monoculture eradicated indigenous biodiversity; the repeated use of petrochemicals led to not only poor soil health, but poisoned wells and high cancer rates. Patel summarized the Green Revolution as "basically the use of industrial technology to avoid dealing with tough social questions. It removed the sting from land reform and represents the triumph of technological thinking versus more sustainable ways of addressing the hunger crisis."

Given the grim results of its predecessor, it is disturbing to hear that the Gates Foundation is trying to mount the "next Green Revolution" in Africa. Through its partner organizations, Gates aims to improve African agriculture in the neediest countries by a combination of free-market fixes and developing genetically modified, drought-tolerant crops.

Gates would do well to heed the 2008 report from the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development (IAASTD). This landmark four-year study undertaken by the World Bank, the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization, and multiple stakeholders in the private and nonprofit sectors across the globe called for a complete overhaul of the world's food and farming systems. A collaboration of more than 400 scientists and development specialists, IAASTD found that industrial agricultural practices, including genetically modified crops, do not address the complex challenges of local agriculture and often produce environmental harm. The answer they propose is agroecology: a blend of scientific inquiry and indigenous knowledge that cultivates resilience and healthy ecosystems. Rather than depend on genetically modified seeds or agro-chemicals, which carry high environmental and health costs, agroecological farming looks to nature's abundance as a model for how to grow food.

Which is exactly the kind of work that, without much fanfare or recognition, ECHO has been quietly doing for the past 30 years.

ON MY LAST day at ECHO, I paid a visit to the Urban Rooftop Garden to see firsthand what has become a major focus of the group's work in the poorest cities of the world. This demonstration area mimics the kind of flat concrete rooftops and tin shacks you might find in the slums of Nairobi, Mexico City, or, before the earthquake, Port-au-Prince. Price looks at the roofs above peoples' heads as huge untapped "fields" on which food can be

FREE GANDHI POSTER

grown. Rooftop gardening was in fact part of Price's original vision for ECHO. On a trip to Port-au-Prince in the early '80s, Price looked out over acres of flat concrete roofs. Here, he realized, was agriculture's final frontier.

On top of the concrete pad in front of me were more than 50 demonstration garden beds made out of various recycled items: old tires, carpet, bamboo. The car tires, filled with compost and sitting on top of concrete blocks, were placed at waist-level for easy access and contained everything from eggplant to strawberries. To my left a plastic kids' pool, filled to the brim with lightweight mulch and compost, grew a healthy crop of sweet peppers. Price's criteria are that the beds must be low weight, inexpensive, give satisfactory production with minimal inputs, contain no moving parts, and be made from local, preferably recycled, materials, i.e. trash.

Price's dream is to one day go to Port-au-Prince or Mumbai and see acres and acres of rooftop gardens. But that would be only the beginning. "Even if there were no more hunger, I'd still be doing what I'm doing. I'd like to see small rural farms become so productive that people leave the slums and return to the countryside. Eliminating hunger and malnutrition is just the first step. There is just so much more to life than not being hungry."

MOST OF US accept perpetual hunger for some as a sad but unavoidable reality. But as much as we, the amply fed, accept the myth that the hunger season will never end for those Haitians, those Sudanese, that homeless guy at the stoplight, we starve our imaginations. Maybe the very word "hunger" has lost its linguistic currency. We need new words, new stories, because the old ones raise too many hackles, induce too much crippling guilt, distract us finally from the important work ahead.

What we need are stories about how people are not only avoiding hunger but are living well. Such stories are myriad. Physically joining our own lives to such stories can help us see the abundant way of living we're each called to embody. I think of the perennial hedgerows on that hillside, how they worked in tandem to create a beautiful and teeming symmetry.

The word hunger is a negation; it represents a deviation from the norm. And what is the norm? In a word—abundance. ■

Fred Bahnson (www.fredbahnson.com), co-founder of Anathoth Community Garden in North Carolina, is working on a book, *Soil & Sacrament: Four Seasons Among the Keepers of the Earth*, forthcoming from Free Press.

THE SEVEN DEADLY SOCIAL SINS

Subscribe to *Sojourners* and receive a poster of Gandhi's "seven deadly social sins" for FREE!

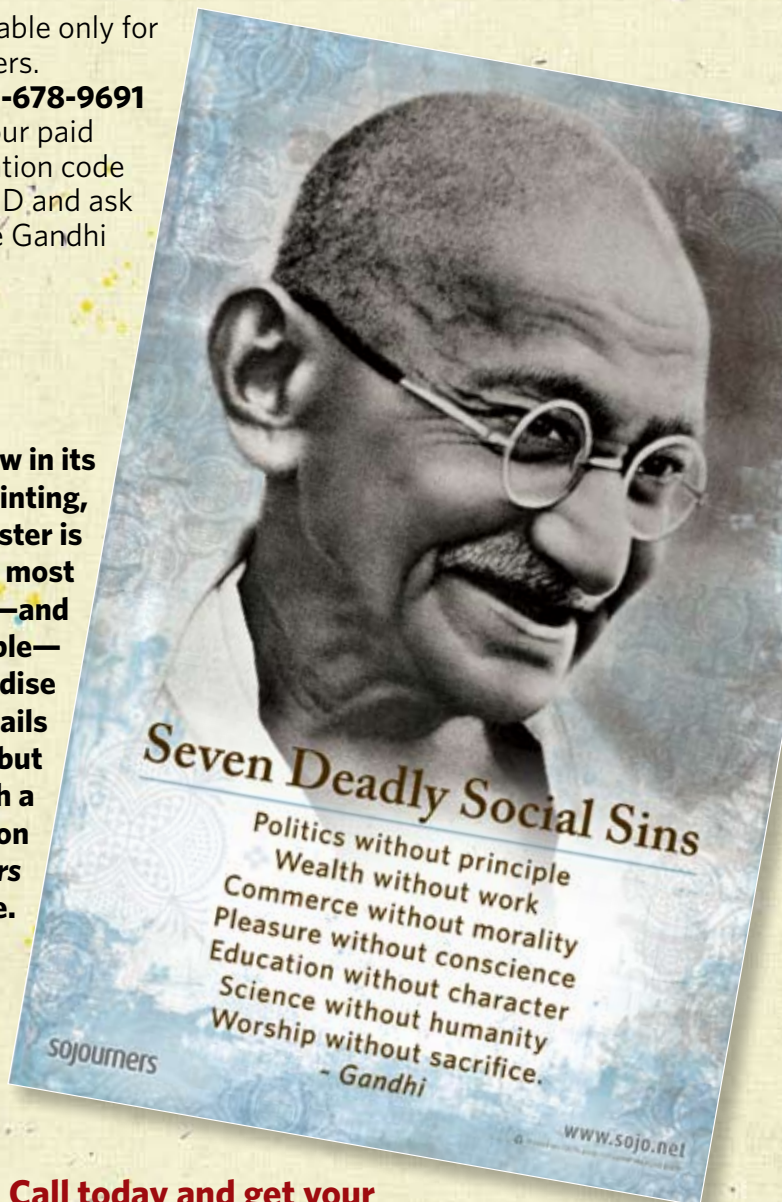
Get a year of the award-winning *Sojourners* magazine (11 issues for \$39.95, \$14.50 off newsstand price) and we'll send you a poster featuring Gandhi's provocative list of seven deadly social sins. This beautiful new edition of one of *Sojourners'* classic posters is printed with soy ink on 100% recycled paper and is sure to spark conversations

Offer available only for phone orders.

Call 1-800-678-9691

to place your paid order; mention code S1108GAND and ask for the free Gandhi poster.

Now in its second printing, this poster is one of our most popular—and memorable—merchandise items. It retails for \$9.95, but is free with a subscription to *Sojourners* magazine.



Call today and get your FREE Seven Deadly Social Sins poster.

No Ordinary Season

DURING ORDINARY TIME, the season after Pentecost, it might appear that not much is going on, ecclesially speaking. There are no appointed fasts, no calls to paschal celebration and feasting. It is an appropriate play on words, this ordinary time in which we merely count the Sundays between Pentecost and Advent. In some ways the selected lectionary passages are a good, albeit sometimes dismal, reminder that, as a general lot, we humans are pathetically ordinary. There is nothing new under the sun. Our hearts have been deceitful for millennia, our tendency and eagerness to exclude others is an age-old problem. Our plotting and planning for most things less-than-good raises few eyebrows. It is to be expected. A glance down history's memory lane shows that humans are actually quite ordinary in our sin.

What is far from ordinary is the reality that we are in a post-resurrection, post-ascension, post-Holy Spirit in-breaking season. It could be quite mind-blowing if we took the time to dwell on it. We are in the season that witnesses to a unique fullness of God's extraordinary



lengths to love, reclaim, and redeem creation. We are invited in our very ordinariness—warts and all—to join in what God's about this season. God has equipped and will equip us to bear witness to God's extraordinary love and power for the benefit of God's diverse and scandalous family.

Enuma Okoro, of Durham, North Carolina, is the author of Reluctant Pilgrim and co-author of Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals.

[AUGUST 7]

Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28; Psalm 85:8-13; Romans 10:5-15; Matthew 14:22-33

WE HAVE TO remember the historical horrors humans have committed against one another. Remembering is necessary to remind ourselves how easily we reject God's invitation to receive love and to turn and love one another. Remembering is key to recalling our ongoing need for grace, forgiveness, and salvation. As the world marks the 66th anniversary of the U.S. dropping nuclear bombs on Japan, the difficult memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is one more extreme example of how we turn away from God, how we convert blessings into curses. In this case, using the gift of science and human intelligence, we created atomic bombs. Sadly, humans all too readily turn God's gifts into something that encourages our own harm. It's an ancient dilemma.

In Genesis 37, young Joseph is blessed with the gift of prophetic dreaming. Instead of meditating on his holy visions, he turns the privilege of being privy to God's future work into a childish opportunity to boast to his older brothers about how they would one

day serve him. We know how his brothers respond to this: They sell him into slavery. Perhaps Joseph's downfall was simply being too immature to know how to use his gifts.

Why is it so difficult for us to participate in both the love and the work of God? Why do we struggle so much to respond to the ever-extending reach of God, one who is eternally positioned toward us and whose purposes are always bigger and better than our own? The psalmist sings faithfully of God's steadfast love toward God's creation, of God's unchanging intentions for creation to recognize and respond to God's initiatives for peace and reconciliation.

In Romans 10, God comes so close to us in Christ Jesus that we are now able to hold the eternal God in our hearts and lay a mystical claim to God with our human lips. But we still find ourselves in the position of Peter in Matthew 14. Peter recognizes God, yet for every step he takes toward Jesus, he sinks in an ocean of doubt, pride, arrogance, fear, envy, and a myriad of other human failings.

[AUGUST 14]

God Redeems

Genesis 45:1-15; Psalm 67;
Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15:10-28

GOD'S WILL FOR redeemed relationship and God's desire to see God's children live into their unique gifts and callings have more sustaining power than anything we might wish for, or commit against, one another. Yet we can understandably believe otherwise given the current global context, ongoing political and violent conflict between southern Christian and northern Muslim factions in Nigeria and Sudan, relentless acts of undocumented sexual violence committed against Congolese women, and countless problems within North America. Still, the truth is that no human intention for ill is too devious for God's victory over darkness, and no circumstance too devastating for God's merciful and incomprehensible in-breaking.

It remains fascinating and perplexing how God fleshes out holy intentions from abominable human abuses and inexcusable ignorance. In Genesis 37 and 45, we witness two beautiful testaments to holy intrusion. First, God does not let go of God's own, even to the extent of crafting life from seeming death (Genesis 45:4-5). Consequently, the second testament is that, despite the trials that Joseph endured, he maintained a God-centered perspective on his life, presumably by faith and trust in God's prevailing purposes (Genesis 45:5b, 7-8). Throughout his years in Egypt, Joseph matured (rather painfully) into his calling, using his gifts of dream interpretation and wise discernment to reap blessings for countless Egyptians and eventually Israelites. (One might poignantly note through Joseph's example that living and growing into our gifts and callings might stem from passing through a refiner's fire.)

Joseph's redeemed relationship with his brothers mirrors God's redeemed relationship with humanity, including the Israelites, of whom Paul writes in Roman 11. Joseph mimics divine mercy. He refuses to reject his people, despite his history. When we enter into covenant with God we recognize that it is God who is the constant and loving restorer, in spite of repeated human foibles. Such a God deserves the psalmist's praise.

What is even more astonishing and

scandalous, as the story of the Canaanite women begging Jesus to heal her daughter boldly notes (Matthew 15:22-28), is that when God redeems, when God's flamboyant love floods out, everything and everyone can get caught in the wake, even those we foolishly imagine have no business petitioning or hungering after God in Christ Jesus.

Where are we willing to join in God's fleshing out of holy intention amid people and places we would rather deny than own?

[AUGUST 21]

Behind Enemy Lines

Exodus 1:8 - 2:10; Psalm 138;
Romans 12:1-8; Matthew 16:13-20

HOW REASSURING IT is to be reminded that God's ways are not the ways of the world. We see ample evidence that "worldly ways" show little interest in addressing the needs of everyone, but God not only welcomes all, but starts with those who have the greatest needs.

Moses' birth narrative (Exodus 1:8 - 2:10) is the template for all the other passages. God saves. God remembers the lowly. God's purposes prevail. God's work is always for the wider community. God uses human agency. God trains us for the work of the kingdom.

Of all the things to highlight in this story, the role of Pharaoh's daughter, one of the women whom God asks to save Moses, cannot be bypassed. We are surprised to see God active behind "enemy lines." Our job is to train ourselves in knowing God's character so well that we can spot God's work wherever acts of mercy, hospitality, compassion, love, and justice are revealed.

As North American Christians, we are tempted to position ourselves as God's "chosen ones," and to name our contemporary "Egyptians" as enemies, based on cultural and religious difference. Yet in Matthew's gospel (16:16-17), when Peter says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," we recognize the importance of divine revelation and permitting God to open our eyes to the holy presence. We affirm the fullness of God in Christ, but fortunately we do not get to determine through whom glimpses of God are manifest. Rather Psalm 138 invites us to

focus on being grateful and praising God's steadfastness and faithfulness.

If only, as Paul urges in Romans 12, we would present our bodies to God to use as God intends for the benefit of all God's children. What would it look like for the church today to humble herself in a way that recognizes that she is equipped by the power of the Triune God to effect God's purposes in the world (Romans 12:6), but also that her role is that of servant, not master (12:3)?

[AUGUST 28]

Dangerous Dwellings

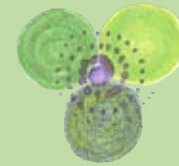
Exodus 3:1-15; Psalm 26:1-8;
Romans 12:9-21; Matthew 16:21-28

"OH LORD, I love the house in which you dwell and the place where your glory abides," sings the psalmist (26:8). There is costly beauty in seeking out where God abides. To dwell with God is to willingly open ourselves to God's burning and seemingly dangerous love for justice. To walk in faithfulness like Moses, and ultimately like Christ, is to be open to the descending way of suffering, humility, and perseverance that is required if we are to live with compassion, with forgiveness, with the radical foolishness of loving our enemies, and with the pursuit of justice. It is not easy to choose the servant's way. It is not easy to sing of loving the house in which God dwells.

Yet the testimony of the burning bush and the call of Moses in Exodus 3 is that God equips those whom God calls. The testimony of Paul's letter to the Romans (12:9-21) is that in the midst of the descending way, the faithful disciple still finds room to rejoice, hope, live peacefully, practice hospitality, and mimic God in Christ Jesus by the power of the Spirit. Our human challenge is to recognize that the descending way of Christ is actually the ascending way away from the evils of the world. Christ reminds us in Matthew 16:24-26 that seeking the place where God's glory abides means losing our life to truly gain it. ■

"Preaching the Word," Sojourners' online resource for sermon preparation and Bible study, is available at www.sojo.net/ptw.

In a world of economic inequalities, some of us recognize that we have more than enough.



Harvest Time

In response to the call of Jesus and the desire of our hearts, we come together to engage our questions about money and faith.

For more information, please visit our website or contact

Rosemary Feerick

408-960-9139

rose@harvesttime.cc

www.HarvestTime.cc



WEAR SOJOURNERS' FRIEND OF AN IMMIGRANT T-SHIRT

and add your voice of compassion to the work for comprehensive immigration reform.

\$10, plus shipping and handling.

Available only at store.sojo.net

"Now that I've found you..."

SONOW WE know why over the past few years our Internet service would sometimes slow to a crawl: Osama bin Laden was tying up the circuits Googling himself. Repeatedly. We found this out from watching videos that one of his three wives apparently took of him sitting in a comfy chair, wrapped in an afghan (or would we call it a *pakistan*?), drinking a Coke, and generally chilling out in front of a computer screen.

(Quick! What's the difference between Newt Gingrich and Osama bin Laden? Answer: Newt had his three wives one at a time. Hahaha. I kid.)

Personal videotapes were just some of the items found in bin Laden's home after U.S. Navy SEALs attempted to deliver a covered dish and some flowers celebrating their



Ken Davis

part to straighten up things afterwards, to the extent of even taking some of the mess home with them. Now *that's* being a good neighbor.

Naturally, I'm assuming American officials will give back all the items, such as computers and data disks, as soon as they are examined and "cleaned," which I'm told

videos for a friend. It's not what it looks like.

■ His home was not heavily guarded. In fact, when Navy SEALs dropped in, only one of bin Laden's trusted couriers was there to greet them (although the greeting might not have passed the Miss Manners test, due to the gunfire involved). The man had probably just returned from one of his trips delivering instructions for the next heinous act of global terrorism, and then picked up sodas and conditioner on the way back. A lot of pressure on one man, particularly when he has to explain the Dr. Pepper he bought for himself.

■ When he wasn't watching *American Idol*, bin Laden was still active as the top leader of al Qaeda. This has always annoyed second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri, not only because he is more educated than bin Laden but also because he considers himself to be a better spokesperson because of his movie-star looks. The fact that the movie star he looks like is an aging Bill Murray is beside the point.

Coincidentally, Navy SEALs are also hoping to visit al-Zawahiri, although they're not sure where he lives. They have, however, ruled out a cave. (SEALs are fast learners.) Personally, I'd check any address in Pakistan that gets Netflix. ■

A visit from the Welcome Wagon goes horribly wrong.

long-delayed reunion. The U.S. military also wanted to drop off several bags of returned mail—for some reason bin Laden had left no forwarding address during his frequent moves—as well as a wedding gift, which was a little awkward since it was at least one wedding behind.

But you know how it is when old friends are reunited, particularly in a region where celebrations traditionally include firing weapons wildly into the air: Someone makes a culturally insensitive joke, somebody accidentally knocks off a visitor's night-vision goggles, and then somebody goes home mad. Or gets buried at sea. Whatever.

But the good news: In reuniting with the world's most wanted criminal mastermind—sorry, *alleged* criminal mastermind—a lot of interesting items were discovered during the clean up. As someone who makes a point of helping tidy up during parties, I appreciate the thoroughness with which the Navy SEALs did their

is a technical term meaning they'll be returned in better shape than when they were removed. Again, a very nice gesture. (I only wish Navy SEALs would barge into my house and take the living room rug, which could use a good "cleaning.")

In the months since, intelligence officials have learned many things about bin Laden's habits and intentions over the past few years:

■ He hasn't been hiding out in caves; he's been resting in the suburbs. Granted, he didn't venture outside much, but who can blame him, what with the region's notoriously hot summers and the fact that no sunscreen has an SPF high enough to protect your skin from Predator drones.

■ He dyed his beard. But hey, that's no crime. What, a man can't feel pretty sometimes? And let those who've never used beauty products cast the first stone. (*Put down that rock, Donald Trump, and drop the volumizer too.*)

■ He was storing pornographic



ONLINE
EDUCATION

Pictured: Lisa Kipp, M.Div. DL student, Rochester, Minn.

Answer your call to ministry...

from wherever you are

**MASTER OF DIVINITY
DISTRIBUTED LEARNING PROGRAM**
(online courses plus on-campus intensives twice a year)

www.luthersem.edu/mdiv_distributed | 1-800-LUTHER3





KIDNAPPED BY THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT.

DISCARDED BY THE SECULAR LEFT.

JESUS NEEDS SAVING.

INTRODUCING *SAVING JESUS*, A 12-EPISODE VIDEO EXPLORATION OF A CREDIBLE JESUS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY.

Who was he? What can we know about him – *really*? Considering everything done in his name, is there anything about him worth saving?

With insights from 25 specialists, *Saving Jesus* leaves behind old paradigms and dogmas for a candid conversation about a Jesus you've probably never heard about – one with relevance for today.

Already a respected resource for hundreds of progressive Christian communities, the twelve 30-minute episodes of *Saving Jesus* are now available on two DVDs in a home edition licensed for personal use.

Featuring:

Marcus Borg
Walter Brueggemann
Diana Butler Bass
John Dominic Crossan
Matthew Fox
Amy-Jill Levine
Brian McLaren
Robin Meyers
Helen Prejean
John Shelby Spong

66% OFF

LIMITED TIME OFFER!

HOME EDITION

Regular \$75 Now \$25
\$8 Shipping & Handling
Expires Sept. 15, 2011
Coupon code S75SJR
Discount only at
savingjesus.com



"We're having a culture war and Jesus happens to be one of the weapons tossed about by both sides."
– Amy-Jill Levine



LIVING THE
QUESTIONS
savingjesus.com